



ESSAYS FOR OUR TIME

Ismail Serageldin

2016

Bibliotheca Alexandrina Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Serageldin, Ismail, 1944-

© 2016, Ismail Serageldin

The information in this publication is solely the responsibility of the author.

Text design and layout: Cherine Bayoumi

ESSAYS FOR OUR TIME

Nizami Ganjavi International Center



CONTENTS

A Changing World	7
Wise Words from Nizami, the Sage of Ganja	13
Facing Facts: What's Wrong with the Current World Order!	33
The Global South: The Next Half Century	47
Crafting Stability in the Middle East	63
Taming the Wild Markets: Steps towards a Humane Globalization	75
Islamic Sharia Law: Modern Concepts in Ancient Rulings	89
Pluralism, Freedom of Expression, and Islam	101
When Democracy Goes Awry	117
Echo-Chambers and the Vortex of Lies: Spirituality and Materialism in the Modern State	125
On the Challenges of Democratic Security	137



A CHANGING WORLD

Since the start of the 21st century, a number of threads have come together to challenge the conventional economic views that prevailed in the end of the 20th century. The arrogance of the western political and economic orthodoxy seemingly knew no bounds, prompting some to talk of “The End of History”, while others spoke of the new “unipolar world” after the collapse of the USSR, and before the rise of China could no longer be ignored.

Yet within a decade into the new century, the picture had changed profoundly. The collapse of western financial markets in 2008, followed by the euro-zone crisis over the debt of a number of its members, most notoriously Greece, showed that there were deep flaws in the way the global markets had been allowed to function. At the same time, the profound challenge of environmental degradation was becoming better understood in all countries. By the end of 2015, the World’s leaders had adopted the new Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) at the UN, and by the

end of the year they had signed a comprehensive and far-reaching Climate Change Agreement in Paris. On the science and technology side, the ICT revolution continued unabated, offering new opportunities and new challenges, while the new biological sciences were also making rapid and huge steps on a global scale.

Politically, the Unipolar perspective, much in vogue in the 1990s, was being replaced by a new, more collaborative multi-polar perspective, gently ushered in by enlarging the consultative processes between more countries and the emergence of the G-20 group as an expansion of the G-7 or G-8 formulations that preceded it.

Then the rise of Global Terrorism created a new challenge for all governments. The more specific manifestation of that Terrorism came with the collapse of the Arab Spring revolutions, and the emergence of failed states and civil wars in the ME and North Africa. Unspeakable horrors are being committed in Syria, Iraq, Yemen, Somalia, Sudan, Libya and in distant places from the African Sahara to the Sinai to Afghanistan. And because the Terrorists of Al-Qaeda and Da'ish wrapped their vicious propaganda in the name of Islam, a deepening rift is emerging between the West and the Muslim communities both in the Muslim-Majority countries and in the West itself,

where in many places Islam has become the second religion among the citizens of the Western Countries themselves.

The scene was set for a profound rethinking of many of the paradigms we inherited from the previous century. The Fourth Baku Forum, organized by the Nizami Ganjavi International Center (NGIC), was therefore devoted to explore the question of whether we are going towards a multipolar world.

This set of essays is intended to provide some of our reflections on questions of relevance to this challenging topic. The essays are grouped in the following fashion:

On Global Ethics

The essay “Wise Words from Nizami, the Sage of Ganja” shows that the ethics of the great Nizami Ganjavi are still pertinent to the discussion of global issues as well as matters of personal conduct. The essay also explains why the NGIC should be the organizer of these international forums that bring together the wise of the world to reflect on the state of the world.

On the New World Order

Three essays are included here. The first two: “Facing Facts” and “The Global South in the Second 50 Years”,

cover the need for major changes in the New World Order. The main point is that the west alone shouldn't seek to impose a new world order, but it should seek to create it in collaboration with the majority of the world's population, which presently lives in the developing countries. But given the collapse of the situation in the Middle East, a third essay: "Crafting Stability in the Middle East" is added to round up that section. Without such stability future scenarios remain enormously volatile. In this century it will not do for two western diplomats to decide the fate of the region as Sykes and Picot did in 1916 when they planned for the aftermath of the collapse of the Ottoman Empire at the end of First World War.

On Economics

No discussion of the changing nature of the world order would be complete without addressing the economic issues of our times. I have included an essay entitled "Taming the Wild Markets: Steps towards a Humane Globalization". Where I try to draw out some of the lessons of the recent past, from the banking crisis of 2008 to the Eurozone crisis and to emphasize the need for balancing the ruthless allocative efficiency of the market with a caring and nurturing state.

On the World of Islam

Given that the cleavage between the West and the World of Islam, including the Muslims in the West as well as Muslims in Muslim-Majority countries is such a central issue at present, I thought it appropriate to introduce two major essays that challenge the conventional stereotypes that westerners have of Islam and Sharia. The first of these is about: “Islamic Sharia Law: Modern Concepts in Ancient Rulings”, which I do not doubt will surprise even the well-educated and knowledgeable westerners. The second, is about “Pluralism, Freedom of Expression, and Islam.” These two essays should lay to rest many stereotypes, and hopefully lead to better understanding and more mutual respect between Muslims and non-Muslims in the West and elsewhere.

On ICT, Democracy and Security

Finally, there are three problems that need prompt attention and serious in-depth thinking. First is the fact that the public in well-established democracies such as Europe and the US are becoming seriously alienated from their elected representatives and the machinery of democracy as they have seen it operate. An essay entitled “When Democracy Goes Awry” looks

more particularly at the USA, but it shows that some corrections are required to have a more responsive system than what exists today. Second, the new ICT revolution and the means it provides to reach and recruit young people to the causes of extremism and violence, and that is addressed by the essay on “Echo-Chambers and the Vortex of Lies”. The essay argues for a pre-emptive approach to reach young people before they are sucked into the clutches of such movements rather than trying to pull them out after they have been recruited. The third essay is about “On the Challenges of Democratic Security”; for in this time of global terrorism, it is essential to watch out that democratic societies while trying to protect their citizens from violence do not gradually erode the rights and freedoms that democracy makes possible.

The NGIC hopes that you find these essays of interest, and we look forward to our deliberations on the future of our changing world.

Ismail Serageldin

Co-Chair

NGIC Board of Trustees

Director

Library of Alexandria, Egypt

WISE WORDS FROM NIZAMI
THE SAGE OF GANJA*

It is perhaps strange to many that we should discuss the ethical perspective of a 12th century Azerbaijani Poet and its relevance to the contemporary world we live in. But it is easy to see that all those who have been concerned with such eternal topics as justice and freedom, who want to differentiate right from wrong, are continuing in our time the concerns of all people from the earliest of human societies. So from antiquity to Nizami, the discussions of these topics cover some of the same terrain that we have to deal with today, albeit recast in the context of our contemporary and incredibly more complex societies.

The efforts to systematize the analytical framework within which to address these concerns certainly dates at least from the times of the ancient Greeks. They not only tussled with Ethics, sometimes referred to as moral philosophy, but also established it as the branch of philosophy that involves systematizing, defending and

* “Wise Words from Nizami the Sage of Ganja”. Note delivered at Nizami Ethics Symposium on 27 February 2015.

recommending concepts of right and wrong conduct. Ethics along with esthetics, which is concerned with such value-laden aspects as beauty, and social concerns with concepts of truth and goodness, constitute a domain of philosophy that we sometimes refer to as Axiology.

Such issues have been at the core of the concerns of philosophers and thinkers, statesmen and writers from that time to the present, no less so in the east than in the west. And in that group of notable global historical figures Nizami deserves to be recognized and listened to.

So today, I would like to address two main topics:

- First: some of the fundamental questions that concern us in global ethics today.
- Second: I would like to introduce Nizami and his works and present what he had to say about many of the dimensions of these contemporary concerns, albeit from a historical vantage point that is derived from a world of more than eight centuries ago.

I do believe that much of what he said is still relevant to our global ethical concerns today, and that his wisdom deserves our attention and respect.

Global Ethics Today

If we talk of global ethics today, it is thanks to the transformation of the world through the crucible of war, and the long search for peace and the growing realization that we are all living on the same planet linked by an increasingly globalized set of connections. It is thanks to the transformation of our societies, that the rise of our mega-cities and the technology of our contacts that underlined our common humanity and the need for shared societies. It is due to the dawning realization that we are all human, and we are all entitled to our basic human rights.

We have by now all acquired an innate belief that issues of human morality, such as good and evil, right and wrong, justice and crime, have a common core that transcends political boundaries. That core is – we now believe – firmly established on the bedrock of “human rights” (HR). We recognize HR as the fundamental benchmark against which every social organization, every law, every transaction can and should be measured. Even if certain minor variations or “riffs” are allowed on some of these concepts such as the socio-cultural definitions of what constitutes “virtue and vice” in societies and over time, there should be no excuse for transgressing the basic Human Rights of individuals, no matter what the circumstances.

Today, globally as much as nationally and locally, we are confronting major issues that I will, for the sake of clarity, limit to **five fundamental goals** we all seek: These are Peace, Freedom, Justice, Equality, and Sustainability. It is to achieve these five goals that we set forth the structure of Governance, locally nationally and internationally, and that **Governance** must have certain basic characteristics such as democracy, which in turn requires pluralism, participation and the rule of law. In addition, there are certain values that we live by, such as Fairness, and **values we judge with** such concepts as Truth, Goodness, Beauty.

Allow me to say a few words about each of these issues before I return to Nizami Ganjavi and his ethics.

Five Fundamental Goals

Peace has become the most fundamental of all human objectives. Not only are weapons becoming ever more lethal, but it is increasingly evident that in the absence of peace, whether war is formally declared or considered a domestic affair, it is totally destructive and enters into the realm of folly. But conflict is inherent in the behavior of humans and of societies as well as nation states. Thus restraints need to be placed on the escalation of conflicts into violent wars. The only

alternative is reasoned participatory formulation of a system of laws at the local, national and international levels to arbitrate disputes without resort to violence. While this may not work in every case, it would help to make such resort to violence as limited as humanly possible, for there is no denying that there will be cases where the use of force may be the only way to protect populations and redress severe conditions of injustice.

War is always problematic. Thus, even if the war is that waged by the state against terrorism, it is usually enough to extend the police powers of the state considerably and to put at risk due process of law, invade privacy and extend the barriers of the surveillance, investigative and interrogation approaches to flagrant breaches of people's constitutional and human rights in the name of security. These are undoubtedly complex matters, and legal philosophies may differ on the extent to which such breaches can be tolerated, but there is no question that the absence of peace, real peace, is detrimental to all that we expect and demand of our societies and to the ethical values that we uphold.

In fact, peace, real peace, is more than the absence of war or conflict. It is a condition in which every individual is allowed to participate fully in the life of the community, and to reach their full potential, to

give to the community the full measure of his or her talents.

Freedom. It is that which we all want. Freedom of choice, freedom of expression, and its corollaries, access to information and transparency, have become central for our conception of the ethics that should govern our relations in this day and age. For our pluralistic societies, our creative diversity – if it is to survive the growing interaction between peoples – requires that acceptance of the other become inbred, and further that it must be nurtured to go beyond acceptance of the principle of freedom of expression to the commitment to defend that right for all those with whom we disagree.

Indeed, in this day and age it is essential to defend that right even for those whose views we find offensive. For it is precisely offensive speech and obnoxious views that require protection in the name of freedom of expression. Surely conventional thoughts and mainstream speech does not require protection, precisely because they are so acceptable to the majority.

I will not belabor the point as to what constitutes free expression as that has benefited from several centuries of debate with generations of free spirits willing to put their well-being and even their very lives on the line to defend the crucial rights that we now have learned

to take for granted. Today, it is expression we defend any medium, including and especially the Internet, and using any form of expression, be it language, music or the arts.

Justice. If modern democratic states are based on a social contract that unites the human family within its borders in a framework of citizenship, then the felt presence of a modicum of social justice is the necessary glue that will hold that society together.

So, if Social Justice has many dimensions, how do we get there? To my mind, the two pillars of achieving Social Justice are Freedom and Equality. Freedom entails the exercise of rights, and that requires that we have the capabilities to exercise these rights. That may need to take into account the innate inequalities between individual capabilities.

But while the principles of justice can be argued at great length, there is a general perception that we can recognize when actions or outcomes are fair or unfair. We do recognize that something may be perfectly legal but is still unfair and therefore unjust. Hence the notion that justice must be tempered with mercy.

But there is an ironclad rule that is now as widely accepted as the concept of Human Rights, and that is equality of all citizens before the law.

Equality. To measure equality before the law is but a start. Some people would see fairness as the provision of equal opportunities only. If the result is to have some who are extremely rich and some who are extremely poor, so be it. Others, most of us in fact, would see that a society where some people are lighting cigars with thousand dollar bills and others are starving is inherently unjust whatever the starting position was and whatever the procedural guarantees have been.

Extreme inequality is corrosive. It hardens the attitudes of the rich and powerful towards the poor and lowly. It builds acceptance of the incongruity of wealth amidst misery and exclusion, undermines the very notions of social justice and social cohesion, makes a mockery of fairness and leads to the slippery path of class warfare as the only means of redress.

*Ill fares the land, to hastening ills a prey,
Where wealth accumulates, and men decay.
—Oliver Goldsmith, The Deserted Village, 1770*

Indeed, recent studies have confirmed our suspicions that far from being a necessary corollary to compensate the talented and inventive, those forces in society that propel society forward, excessive inequality is inefficient and is associated with a variety of social ills.

But all efforts to provide equality of outcome have run afoul of the inherent different endowments of people, as witnessed in communist societies who ideologically pursued such notions. Thus most of us would demand a minimum of decent standards of living in the outcome in addition to the equality of opportunity in the start position.

Perhaps it is better to talk of equity rather than equality. The former is more relational, the latter more absolute. Equity is defined as something that is just, impartial, and fair. That leads to a view of Justice applied in circumstances covered by law yet influenced by principles of ethics and fairness. How these latter must be exercised can and will change over time as social circumstances change.

Sustainability is to leave future generations as many, if not more, opportunities than we have had ourselves. It requires that our actions today prove sustainable in economic, ecological, and social terms. This vision of sustainable development is one that is people centered and gender conscious, that seeks equity for all and recognizes the interdependence of all living things. An ethical vision, that will lead us to act fairly to each other, to nature and to future generations.

On Governance and Values

Governance, Pluralism, the Rule of law, transparency, accountability, free expression and free flow of information are as necessary to good governance as the participation of the citizens. We have come to see these as synonymous with democracy, which adds the element of the legitimacy of the ruling government based on the consent of the governed, usually expressed by periodic elections. Government of the people, by the people, for the people.

But while we may argue about the details of how that is best achieved, one of the fundamental challenges we face in our world today is how to ensure pluralism and openness to the other, for pluralism and diversity while they can be enriching, can also be a source of conflict and strife.

Values: Social norms and individual values make a society function. They provide the trust, the glue that holds a society together and makes transactions possible. Values we live by and values we judge with give meaning to such abstract concepts as Truth, Goodness and Beauty.

With that background, we can turn to Nizami and his writings.

What Nizami Said

Like all the great teachers, Nizami favored the use of parables and metaphors to impart his wisdom. Nizami lived in the 12th century, and understandably he did not discuss issues like democracy, but he devoted much of his writing to how wise rulers should rule, and on how courageous but impetuous rulers should acquire wisdom. He believed that wise rulers should serve justice and protect human dignity. All of that runs throughout much of his work, told in parables, anecdotes and stories. You can track endless examples, from the vignette found in the second of the twenty didactic chapters of the “Treasure House of the Mysteries” (*Makhzan Al-Asrar*) where two owls standing in a ruined and deserted village opine that if the ruler continues his bad governance, all villages will look like that...on to the epic adventures of Bahram Gur in the *Haft Paykar* and Alexander the Great in the *Iskander Nama*, where the flamboyant, courageous rulers learn wisdom along the way, and return as wise rulers to tend to the duties of leadership and to spread the words of wisdom to others.

Power and Intrigue

He believed that political stability based on justice and equity is essential and he did support openness to the other and pluralism. He lived by his values and advised his son to avoid proximity of power and the palace intrigues that accompany the lust for power:

*Refrain from seeking the society of kings...
Like exposing dry cotton to fire's burnings!
Light from the fire may be pleasant enough,
But to be safe one must stay a distance off...
Moth that's allured by the flame of a candle
Is burnt when a companion at a banquet table¹.*

Today at a time when the practice of politics gives accolades to those who “win”, frequently without adequate attention to how they got there, it is important

¹ In choosing English translations to cite passages from Nizami, many choices were available. Indeed, The Poems of Nizami have been translated by several authors. For example, the *Makhzan Al-Asrar* (the Treasury of Mysteries) itself has been extremely well translated literally into English by G.H. Darab in 1945, and that translation inspired, and was reworked by, Paul Smith for his own rhyming version of 2012. Smith has translated an enormous amount of Farsi literature into English, and is probably among the most recent and the most prolific of translators. I have chosen to take his English renderings of the Nizami quotations in this essay. The passage here, and subsequent passages, are taken from Paul Smith's "Introduction" in *Nizami: The Treasury of the Mysteries*, Translation and introduction by Paul Smith, New Humanity Books, Australia, Copyright Paul Smith 2005, 2012, p. 25 (henceforth referred to as Paul Smith).

to be reminded that already over 800 years ago, Nizami warned not just of the corrupting influence of the practice of power, but also of the corruption that comes in the pursuit of power.

Peace

He believed in Peace and non-violence. In looking back at his own life, he could observe:

*For as long as I have lived, never in violent
Way has the wing of a fly been bent
Never mixed dregs in another's freshwater
Sought to disturb another's condition, Never²!*

But Nizami went further. Not only did he advocate not doing harm to one's enemies, but also that the best way to use one's short time here on this earth was to be good to one's neighbors and friends:

*And from dusk to dawn for life to stay is hopeless
Only seed worth growing is the seed of goodness;
And because the world will not stay for anyone,
Being kind to one's friends is best; this I stress³.*

He advocated leading *a virtuous life without greed:*

*In your village upon your own private estate,
Don't think of eating from another's plate.*

² Ibid., p. 37.

³ Ibid., p. 48.

*Fortune will turn upon the unthinking fellow
Whose foot beyond his garment will allow⁴...*

On Pluralism

Nizami was open to all the cultures of his time. He told all to be open to all the cultures of the world and that they would benefit enormously from such openness.

He says in the *Khiraad Nameh* that he researched in all the tongues and found pearls and gems of wisdom that he collected and polished with his poetry to integrate them into a whole:

*From every manuscript some worth came to me,
I found and embellished it with jewels of poetry.
I filled up my store from the more recent history:
The Jewish and Armenian and also the Pahlavi.
I took from every grain that which was excellent,
And in from each pod the innermost kernel went.
I joined riches of one tongue to those of another,
And the mass into complete whole did I gather.*

Beyond pluralism lies the question of equality. The most critical issue in all societies is still gender equality, but especially in eastern societies. Here it is important to remind ourselves that Nizami was writing over 800 years ago...and yet he surprises there too...let us review his depiction of women.

⁴ Ibid., p. 25.

Nizami's Depiction of Women

Women in Nizami's epic romantic poems are endowed with great beauty, elevated on a pedestal and are objects of desire that inspire men to great deeds as when Farhad literally moves mountains to win the love of Shirin. But the greatness of Nizami is that he does not limit himself to this typical idealized view of women, so prevalent in his times, and found in so many of the chivalry tales in east and west, where beautiful and chaste damsels in distress inspire courageous knights to slay the dragon and rescue the damsel.

Nizami portrayed women as full blooded creatures, well rounded, who evolved over time, and who could be the equal of men in every way, even in the most unusual, such as physical strength. A striking example of this, is how the coquettish Fitna in the *Haft Paykar*, achieves that. She tells the king that anything can be achieved by determination, because "practice makes perfect", and is sent to her death for her insolence, but is spared and lives unknown for six years, during which she learns to carry a calf on her shoulders and carry it up and down sixty steps! A feat that few men could equal in physical strength.

Likewise, it is a wise woman, Queen Nushaba of Barda, who teaches an important lesson to Alexander

the Great in the *Iskander Nameh*. The Queen, who had recognized Alexander who had come disguised as a messenger, tells him that she knows who he is, and then offers Alexander jewels and gold to eat, which he refuses, to which she points out that yet men are killed for such “treasure” and then offers him bread which is produced by the same men who are killed for the inedible jewels and stones.

In Nizami’s world women learn, and his princesses are educated, skillful and wise as well as beautiful. In *Layla and Majnun*, the two adolescents meet in school where they study together, until Qays is smitten by Layla’s beauty.

Thus Nizami’s views of women as complete beings that can match men in intellect, determination and even physical strength, as well as being beautiful evanescent creatures that attract and inspire men, is noteworthy. It is one more interesting facet of the magnificent sage of Ganja.

On Behavior and Reforming Society

He also advised his son to learn on the importance of speaking the truth, respecting the law and avoiding lies and legal trickeries from the Farsi verses translated by Smith:

*But let the law instruct you in God's service,
Let it not teach you how to lie...this I stress.*

400 years later in *Hamlet*, Shakespeare would elegantly rephrase these same thoughts in the lines he gives Polonius:

*This above all: to thine own self be true,
And it must follow, as the night the day,
Thou canst not then be false to any man.*

Nizami was a profound humanist who believed in the innate goodness of people and their perfectibility, and he wrote much about the values that individuals should adopt in their lives. He was deeply concerned with society and the human condition, to the point that McDonald would write that, "Nizami was... a genuine social reformer"⁵.

The Path to Wisdom

Nizami wrote many beautiful poems (collected in his *divan*) beyond his famous five epic masterpieces. The poems were mostly of a religious or admonitory or ethical character and which contain indications and symbols for the initiated.

⁵ M.V. McDonald, "The Religious and Social Views Nizami of Ganjeh", *Iran* Vol. 1, 1963: p. 99.

So, the sage was always present in the poet, and the religious mystic was there in the quiet man who lived his simple virtuous country life producing his stream of historic master pieces. His death in 1209, would leave a void in the world of literature, but he bequeathed the world an enormous legacy.

To those who want wisdom, he recommends that they choose the profound and mystical path of spiritual enlightenment through Sufism, but he warned that it requires the crushing of one's ego to seek the higher truth. This is clearly expressed in Nizami's Divan as given by Smith's rendition:

*I went to Winehouse last night but a way in I couldn't
see,
I called and called but no one inside seemed to listen to
me.*

*[... And the wine-seller finally answers him saying...]
"it's not the time when door's opened by one for anyone:
be
More thoughtful, it's no mosque where door is always
open,
where you can come, go and push to the front deliberately:
[...]"*

*Every religious community in the world is here:
Muslims...
Hindus, Zoroastrians, Christians, Jews, one community.
Listen, if you've anything to say, then first you should go*

And make yourself dust under their feet...it is that easy!"

It is clear that Nizami is not speaking of a literal Tavern where wayfarers and locals go to imbibe real wine and get drunk⁶. Rather Nizami is speaking of the notion of wisdom, which transcends mere religious practice (...it is no mosque whose door is always open...) and to reach that house of wisdom you must take the mystical path, but that mystical path requires first that you overcome your ego, your pride – make yourself dust under the feet of all the wise from all the traditions – and then and only then will you gain the insights that will allow you to move towards gaining wisdom.

Conclusions

Nizami's work is more than a paramount symbol of great literature. It is indeed part of the global heritage of humanity. It has, like all great legacies, reached universality through deep-rooted traditions interpreted with great art. It combines the story-teller's skill with the lyrical language of the poet.

⁶ Indeed, Hafiz, the great mystical poet, decades after Nizami, wrote a magnificent Masnavi poem which he called the "Book of the Wine Bringer".

In addition, we all feel that beyond the art and craft of the wordsmith and the storyteller, there is the sincerity of Nizami. You feel that his sense of justice is not feigned. His spirituality reflects genuine piety, not a showy religiosity. His deep concern for the human condition is not just for the characters in his epics, but for all people.

He continues to inspire, and in the twentieth century, Abdel Naiem Hassanein, Egypt's most eminent specialist of Farsi (Persian) literature, would devote his master work (in Arabic) to Nizami and his times. He appropriately titled it: "Nizami Ganjavi: the Poet of Virtue"...an appropriate testimonial to the great Azerbaijani and his enduring legacy.

Nizami lives. His values still inspire and have stood the test of time. When we think of global ethics, it is appropriate to reflect on the views of the Sage of Ganja, the great Nizami.

**FACING FACTS:
WHAT'S WRONG WITH THE CURRENT WORLD
ORDER!***

Introduction: A Moment of Crisis

This is a critical moment in world history. The world order that had so patiently been erected in the last half century has become unraveled. It is not the end of history as Fukuyama claimed, nor is it the clash of civilizations as Huntington believed...it is much worse.

The present world order with its expected norms of behavior for the member states of the United Nations, is being severely challenged.

From a *Russia* that reaches outwards...ascertaining rights to interfere in all areas where Russian speakers may exist; a new kind of Brezhnev doctrine that we thought was long since dead and buried. We see not only the current crisis in Ukraine, but also the

* Facing Facts: What's Wrong with the Current World Order". Opening statement at the third Nizami Ganjavi International Center (NGIC) meeting/Club de Madrid (CdM) Baku Forum, Andorra: 5 September 2014.

FACING FACTS:
WHAT'S WRONG WITH THE CURRENT WORLD ORDER!

stalled situations in Russia's periphery, from Nagorno Karabagh in Azerbaijan, to Ossetia and Abkhazia in Georgia, as well as a resurgence of Russian influence in the countries that were either part of, or under the tutelage of, the Soviet Union, and who are NOT currently protected by the shield of NATO.

And, from a newly assertive *China* that claims its own sphere of influence in the South China Sea in a sort of a mirror image of the Monroe doctrine of 200 years ago.

Both of these new giants are asserting their spheres of influence, and in the best tradition of balance of power politics are probing their periphery to gauge the extent of resistance and to try to expand their political dominance.

Today, the specter of war in Europe has been awakened.

While on the other side of the Mediterranean, the specter of barbarism has been resurrected...there, the world of the middle ages is upon us as Da'ish, the so-called Islamic State, wages all-out war and seeks to claim the legacy of the Ottoman empire, if not beyond...

The Fanatics are everywhere from Boko Haram in Nigeria to Al-Qaeda in the Sahara and the Maghreb to the mountains of Afghanistan...They are trying to

impose by force and intimidation their own vision of a state that is medieval in its outlook, and modern in its weaponry and technology...

That project and better disguised Islamists, turned the Arab spring into an Islamist winter, as the humanist forces of modernity in those countries fought back.

The Egyptian people, in a magnificent example of people power, came out in their tens of millions and rejected the Islamist project, while Egypt, resurrected, battles fanatics in the Sinai and terrorism at home. And all around Egypt war rages: in Gaza, in Libya, in Yemen, in Sudan, in Syria, in Iraq, in Somalia, and in the vast Sahara...

The world order is in crisis. Democracy is weakening with crises of confidence between people and their elected governments. Fresh thinking is required. I am glad that the CdM and the NGIC as well as the Bibliotheca Alexandrina (BA) have been thinking of what new democratic instruments for the 21st century would be like. But our current discussion is about the current crisis and how we move on to rebuild trust in a wider Europe and beyond.

Today as our world order lies in shambles we have to try to understand why? What went wrong?

FACING FACTS:

WHAT'S WRONG WITH THE CURRENT WORLD ORDER!

Before we make recommendations for rebuilding trust in a wider Europe, perhaps we should briefly consider two themes:

Where did the current world order (of which Europe is an integral part) originally come from? What were its founding principles and ideas?

Why is it in crisis today? What are the key challenges that we need to address to rebuild trust in a wider Europe and beyond?

Allow me to say a few words about each of these questions.

The Foundations of the Current World Order

The current world order was largely crafted by the Western Allies after WW2, and there have been **three views of the international order** that have co-existed without any of their contradictions ever being fully sorted out.

One view is the view that emerged from the treaty of Westphalia in 1648, which basically recognized **sovereign states as the building blocs of international legitimacy**, and assumed that governments that had full control of that territory were the legitimate partners for discussions led by authorized representatives of these governments.

But after WW2, Europe changed, and we witnessed *Europe's march toward a Union*. But it did not become the United States of Europe with a unitary central government. Undoubtedly, a magnificent experiment to create a community of nations bound together in a supra-national Union through a series of alliances and relying on soft power to achieve their objectives. That, of course produced its own contradictions, and the variable geometry of the overlapping treaties made these both subtle and complex. It made pursuit of a clear strategy difficult for the union as a whole while important nations had their own agendas to pursue their interests as they saw them.

The second view consisted of a belief in *the Peoples of the World*, and assumed that governments that controlled their territories by force, were not necessarily legitimate. This view was articulated in public declarations by the United States, though some of us – perhaps more cynical than others – would point out that American actions in places like Chile in 1973, and elsewhere, did not really conform to the rhetoric. But that view, namely that people are inherently reasonable and inclined toward peaceful compromise and common sense, meant that the spread of democracy was an, if not the, overarching goal for building the new international order. Ardent supporters of globalization

argued that free trade and open markets would uplift individuals, enrich societies and substitute economic interdependence for traditional international rivalries. That view was buoyed by the collapse of the Soviet Union, and the liberation of Eastern Europe.

The third view which did not survive much beyond its initiation, was that multilateral constructs: starting with the UN, with its Security Council, plus the International Court of Justice, and subsequently the International Criminal Court, not to mention other multilateral bodies like the IMF, the WTO and the World Bank, should govern the behavior of nations, and that all must abide by the international legal regime created by the sovereign nation states acting in consort through these multilateral bodies.

The coexistence of these three points of view has created inherent tensions and conflicts that have never been formally resolved in the last fifty years. But the general thrust of the new world order, that replaced the Cold War, emerged largely with a dominance of the first two viewpoints at the expense of the third. The G-7 or G-8 was replaced by the G-20 but the Security Council remains as it was in 1945. Sovereign states still run their foreign policies and jealously guard their sovereignty (except in Europe where the EU is a somewhat different beast), and increasingly

the pressures of nations, and civil society, ask for legitimacy of regimes to be manifested by some form of participatory democratic process.

The Emerging paradigm that came out of the interaction of these three points of view is what we have inherited today.

In the decades following World War II, the US— with its economy representing almost 50% of global GDP, and its armies able to strike at the farthest reaches of the planet, and sole possessor of the atomic bomb, crafted the global system to suit its ambitions and its aspirations. One of these aspirations is that – as Woodrow Wilson said after WWI – to “make the world safe for democracy”.

It became fashionable to argue that with the spread of liberty and democracy, there would be a global order that would provide just and lasting peace for all. Globalization and free trade would enrich nations and societies, and uplift individuals, and economic interdependence would dissolve traditional international rivalries.

The cold war consolidated that view into the dominant ideological construct. Towards the last decades of the 20th century, the vision seemed to be coming to fruition: The dictatorships of Latin America

FACING FACTS:
WHAT'S WRONG WITH THE CURRENT WORLD ORDER!

had largely been replaced by democracies, and with the collapse of the USSR Eastern Europe was liberated and largely joined the consort of the European nations, forging their ever more perfect Union.

So as the 20th century gave way to the 21st, and for a brief moment, we had the hope to formalize a new world order that would favor democracy, human rights, and open markets, and trade and communications. The Internet revolution and mobile telephony were promising new miracles every day, and the idea of global peace seemed to be within our reach, and we designed the Millennium Development Goals to deal with the burdens of poverty and under-development.

Five Major Contradictions

So: What's wrong with that picture? What went wrong?

Well, there are at least *five major contradictions* that have come to a head, and made this moment of crisis one of the most serious in history.

The first contradiction is that this set of concepts and ideas is **a totally Western creation**, and the vast majority of **the rest of the world acquiesced but did not participate in formulating or implementing these visions**. For many, the nation state remained sovereign, and the premium of non-interference in

domestic affairs was important, and they started behaving like the European powers of an earlier age.

The second contradiction is the *rise of Muslim fanatics*. These forces have disturbed the stability and order of countries from Indonesia to Nigeria, and pose a different challenge than past terrorist movements or rogue states. They now pose a real threat to Europe and America. They are actually trying to undo the existing world order – the “lines in the sand drawn by the Sykes-Picot agreement” during WW1 – and to establish a religious state based on a barbaric, fanatic ideology. They kill far more Muslims than non-Muslims. They are waging fierce wars, creating failed states, and displacing millions of persons.

The challenge here is an ideological one, reminiscent of the rise of other totalitarian ideologies, such as Communism in the 19th and 20th centuries. Today there is a specter haunting the world, and it is the specter of these fanatics. Response to that challenge requires profound rethinking of many things, from diplomacy to military action, from intellectual responses to the relationship of America and Europe with the Muslim minorities among their citizens, all the way to the role of the Muslim majority countries in the new world order. That is a complex topic that deserves Europe’s

immediate attention. It is NOT a far-off threat; it is here and now.

Third, is the nature of the state itself – which is still the basic formal unit of international life – has been subjected to many pressures.

The challenge in Europe is that Europeans have not yet resolved the tensions between their union and its component parts. It is a creation that is only half completed, with many new members being integrated into the constructs created by the original six, and more members-in-waiting who have not even crossed the threshold into the EU sanctum. But the EU does not have the attributes of a unitary sovereign state. Moreover, the variable geometry of the various military, financial, economic and political treaties that tie different members in different configurations makes for an EU that still lacks the ability to act as a block on foreign policy. A foreign policy based primarily on “soft power” cannot be very effective in moments of crisis if it lacks the commitment of its member states to a unified strategy.

At its heart, the EU was a means of replacing balance-of-power politics by agreed concepts of legitimacy, and to project a common foreign policy based on “soft power” rather than military threat. The forces of

NATO still relied extensively on American arms for their credible deployment.

The challenge in Asia is the opposite of Europe's: Balance-of-power principles prevail unrelated to an agreed concept of legitimacy, driving some disagreements to the edge of confrontation.

The challenge in West Asia and North Africa (WANA) stretching into the horn of Africa, is the rapid collapse of the nation states into warring sectarian and ethnic militias, with foreign powers backing them, as they violate borders and sovereignty at will. *Failed states* unable to control their own territory have no ability to speak as sovereign states in balance-of-power constructs, nor do they have the credibility to act on the basis of a conceptual legitimacy.

The fourth contradiction is between Politics and Economics. It is between the development of the international economy with ever freer trade, more Science, Technology and Innovation (STI), and the political institutions that try to govern it. The international economic order is increasingly global and the international political order is still built on the sovereign nation state. Economic globalization and the Internet – discussed at the IGF in Istanbul in September 2014 – ignores national political boundaries. The

sovereign state reaffirms them, and foreign policy serves the interests of the sovereign states, even as it proclaims its intention to reconcile conflicting national aims with the ideals of world order.

The still incipient international order thus faces a paradox: Its members are pursuing their prosperity by furthering and deepening globalization, but the process produces political reactions that often work counter to these aspirations. Soon, the governments of individual countries are forced to respond to the felt needs of their citizens, when these feel the pressure of imports of cheap goods, expensive energy or plentiful immigration.

The fifth contradiction is the obvious obsolescence of the UN design and the absence of any alternative design or forum where the great powers can actually address the most pressing challenges of our time, and reach decisions that can be implemented, even as much of the rhetoric of the world powers seems to imply that we aspire to a multi-lateral legitimacy for action.

Occasional joint declarations cannot produce a contemporary structure of international rules and norms. A new world order, if it is to prove relevant, cannot merely be affirmed by successive multi-lateral forums, or leaders' photo-ops and civil society media events; it must be fostered as a matter of common

conviction, by supra-national mechanisms that have acquired a legitimacy to make decisions, and that can mobilize the muscle to act to enforce these decisions on recalcitrant parts of the global world order.

To the Future

Any effort to design a new world order with wider security arrangements must address that legacy of the collapsing world order of today. Europe is a central piece of the past and present order, and will be a central part of the new order. To do so, **we must address the five major contradictions and the challenges that brought us to this unhappy point.** Otherwise, it is probable that we shall simply drift into letting major regions be dominated by the regional powers with their own perceptions of the role of the sovereign state. Tensions between these major regions, or spheres of influence, will inevitably arise as the frictions at their periphery will become tests of strength and determination to expand each regional power's claim of dominion over more territory.

I do hope that we will take some significant steps towards more clarity for the road ahead, the arduous road towards rebuilding trust in a wider Europe and beyond.



THE GLOBAL SOUTH: THE NEXT HALF CENTURY*

The Past: In the Shadow of the West

The Bretton Woods Conference that established the post-World-War II economic order is 70 years old this year. The Global South is just reaching its half-century mark. The reason for the rise of the latter is the failure of the former.

The global economic system for the post World War II world was designed by the big powers at a conference held in 1944 in the New Hampshire resort of Bretton Woods. That conference, held one year before the 1945 San Francisco conference that created the UN, was devoted to the post-war economic regime that would govern international economic, financial and trade relations. The result was the creation of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank and the International Trade Organization (ITO). That system was designed by the victorious allies of

* “The Global South: The Next Half Century”. An essay delivered to the organization of the Global South 50th anniversary celebration, 17 July 2014.

the global conflict, the dominant colonial powers of that era. It served their interests and was governed by them. The Soviet Union opting for the confrontational posture of the Cold War, refused to join the system, until the Union's demise in 1991.

The ITO was not approved by the US senate and so it was first born as a provisional treaty named the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) to be finally renamed the WTO only in January 1995, but still doing very much the same function as globalization came to dominate the economic agenda of the end of the 20th century.

Although most people in the world, and specifically the people of the Global South, recognize that the UN with its slanted membership powers in the Security Council needs to be reformed, it was primarily in the Bretton Woods System that the feeling of marginalization by the non-Western powers was most acute.

The Global South, a term that emerged in the sixties was the inheritor of the "Third World", and was globally manifested politically in two groupings both of which were formed some fifty years ago: The Group of 77 which celebrates its 50 years in 2014, and the Non-Aligned Movement which celebrated its 50 years in 2011.

In 1974, the countries of the Global South tried to push through the General Assembly of the United Nations a “New International Economic Order” (NIEO), which was composed of a set of proposals to promote their interests by improving their terms of trade, increasing development assistance, developed-country tariff reductions, and other means. It was meant to be a revision of the international economic system in favor of the poor countries. “The Declaration for the Establishment of a New International Economic Order”, was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1974, and referred to a wide range of trade, financial, commodity, and debt-related issues (1 May 1974, A/RES/S-6/3201). Along with the declaration, a “Programme of Action” and a “Charter of Economic Rights and Duties of States” were also adopted (12 December 1974, A/RES/29/3281). This was the most complete effort of the countries of the Global South to overhaul the Bretton Woods System. It failed to have any impact. Beyond the flaws in the document (such as advocacy of central planning, then much in vogue), Western opposition completely killed it. The US and its allies were too powerful.

On the whole then, while decolonization was successfully completed in the post war period and through the sixties, and despite the many demands of

the developing countries, the post war world economic order remained largely unchanged.

Looking at the second half of the 20th century, one sees that the political momentum of the victorious allies as the founding democracies in the world, fighting authoritarianism, plus their enormous wealth and the success of the welfare state in raising the standard of living of their citizens all made the postwar order seem acceptable to many, if not most, of the world. The G-7 group of Western powers, victorious in the Cold War with the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, and then the expansion of democracy and the entry of the former socialist states of Eastern Europe into the European Union and NATO seemed to seal the success of the West, and ensure that the coming 21st century would see more of the same. But things have not worked out that way.

Breaking the Chains: From NICs to BRICS

The Global South, representing almost 80% of humanity would rise again at the beginning of the 21st century. First, we witnessed the emergence of the Newly Industrialized Countries (the NICs) in the 1980s, as Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong and Singapore were aptly recognized as the Asian Tigers. Korea,

one of the poorest countries in the 1950s, was now exporting automobiles and electronics to the USA. Soon Samsung would overtake Sony of Japan, and Korea would rank third after the USA and Japan in the number of patents, ahead of the UK, France and even Germany. Mexico, Korea and Chile as well as the Eastern Europeans, joined the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the club of the rich countries established in 1960.

By the beginning of the 21st century these success stories were overtaken by the biggest success story of all: China's unstoppable rise to dominate much of manufacturing and to become the second largest economy in the world.

China became the holder of the world's largest reserves, and Asia generally withstood the debt and credit crisis of 2007-2008 which struck Western banks. The enormous meltdown resulted in a major burden on the Western powers. Their economies reeling, their citizens rebellious and dissatisfied, the Western powers seemed off-balance and unable to cope, much less to lead. Politically and militarily, the US seemed to have alienated everybody with its wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Against that background, the surging China seemed to offer another model that suddenly

appeared to many to be a possible alternative to the liberal economics, and democratic politics of the West.

Already from the beginning of the century, the G-7 enlarged its consultations creating the G-20. But countering the G-7, there emerged the BRICS: Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa, all being distinguished by their large, fast-growing economies and significant influence on regional and global affairs, and they are all G-20 members. These countries have started to build their own institutions in parallel to the Bretton Woods institutions.

Noting that the international institutions (the World Bank and the IMF) did not provide enough voting power to the developing countries and over represented the West, the leaders of the five BRICS countries met in Brazil in July 2014, and created a new \$100bn development bank and emergency reserve fund.

The leaders announced that the bank will start with \$50 Billion Capitalization and have its headquarters in Shanghai. The first president for the bank will come from India.

The emergency reserve fund – which was referred to as a “Contingency Reserve Arrangement” – will also have \$100bn, and will help developing nations avoid

“short-term liquidity pressures”, a clear indication of a parallel role to the IMF.

However, it was announced that it would “complement” existing international arrangements”.

So, as the Global South reaches the half century mark, we can see that some of the mass of the poor countries of the world have clearly pulled ahead, defining themselves on the global stage, and challenging the Western powers’ long-standing hegemony. So what is left of the original solidarity that pulled together 80% of the world’s population in a group to challenge the economic world order and the institutions that perpetuated the special status of the western countries?

The Challenges of the New Century

The configuration of success stories and emerging muscle shows that there shall be no repeat to the G-7 defeat of the New International Economic Order proposal of the last century. It also shows that business as usual for the Western powers is over. The palliative of the G-20, while definitely a step in the right direction, is going to be insufficient to respond to the rising aspirations of the poor developing countries.

Twenty five years ago, the South Commission, headed by Julius Nyerere, submitted its report. In

that report the Commission considered that the fundamental international cleavage was primarily between the rich and the poor, and defined the basis for grouping the countries of the Global South together as the result of their resolve to pursue united action in the struggle for a fairer international economic system. Today, the economic system is changing. And the BRICS can see value in special partnerships with the poorer developing countries of the world, especially in closer ties with Sub-Saharan Africa, where an enormous potential remains unexploited.

But does that lay the foundation for the next half century of solidarity? I think not. That is enough for formulating a series of trade deals and possibly for a number of joint ventures, but unless there is a conscious policy that regroups the Global South around a system, whereby the poorest and least developed countries will be assisted by the more advanced countries of the Global South, to attain a sustainable development path, that solidarity will remain mostly confined to political rhetoric.

In other words, the solidarity that characterized the countries of the Global South in the last half century was based on being *against* the postwar order crafted by the Western powers. In the next half century it will have to be based on being *for* something more than

what has been achieved. It is infinitely harder to forge a coalition around a positive goal than around a negative goal. Thus, in many colonies, a national consensus could be easily forged against the colonizer for the limited goal of independence. The colonized, from extreme leftists to right wing nationalists, despite the various ethnic and religious identities of the nationals, could all agree on the goal of independence. However, when the independent state had to face the choice of what sort of an independent country they wanted to build, these differences emerged.

So the Global South countries have to forge alliances based on their remaining commonalities of interests and their likely new avenues for cooperation. In the tasks of nation building, South-South collaboration will now loom large. This will be essential if we are to transcend the narrow confines of individual nations, and pursue a purpose that will seem worthwhile to many. Europe showed the way, when visionary Europeans such as Jean Monnet and Robert Schuman, crafted the European Union, a community of nations, among erstwhile foes and longtime adversaries. The Global South must have such a supra-national perspective, a new “raison d’être” for the countries concerned as they enter their second half century.

More Than an Echo of the G-20

The Global South must offer more than pure economic issues. The G-20, where the leaders of the Global South already sit, is the pre-eminent economic forum of the planet. The leaders of these countries have been meeting regularly since 2008. The G-20 economies represent around 85% of the Gross World Product (GWP); 80% of world trade. In terms of population, because of the membership of the global south countries, the G-20 accounts for about two-thirds of the world population. So what is the need for an organization of the Global South unless it offers something more than the same G-20 menu?

The countries of the Global South must be willing to become the champions of a profound revision of the legacy of the 20th century economic paradigm, not just the institutions that governed it on the global scale. They must actively promote the development and adoption of an alternative economic paradigm.

Today, many distinguished economists have argued against the current paradigm that deifies GDP growth and pays only lip service to everything else from equity to welfare, from quality of life to environment. Many are still repeating the mantras of the extremists of the Reagan-Thatcher ideology that argued that the private

sector would do everything and governs best that governs least.

We must recognize that the private sector will not take care of public goods, and that the public must remain engaged to deal with market failures and public goods.

All of that is possible. It will not diminish the vibrancy of the entrepreneurial spirit, but it will help make new investments environmentally friendly and socially responsible.

But still the *raison d'être* of the Global South in the next half century must be founded on broader values and be woven in a larger vision than reforming the economic paradigm.

A Vision for the Global South

The Global South must harness the emerging universal values of our common humanity, and create a coalition of the caring. It must mean something to be a member of the Global South, something more than that you are poor and are against an international economic order that serves the interests of the rich. I believe that the Global South must stand for certain values that should be central to all its members of which the following basic thrusts appear paramount.

First: Ensure real participation in global decision making: Problems today confront governments beyond their borders. All governments need to collaborate in an effective international machinery of decision-making to take action against environmental problems, the chaotic structure of our markets and the multiple levels and overlapping jurisdictions that govern human action in the world of the 21st century. The leaders of the Global South should help set that agenda inclusively, to avoid others suffering the same marginalization that they suffered from in the last century. They would be the forum that brings in rich and poor countries, large and small economies, to fight poverty and promote sustainable development. Those with dual membership in the Global South and the G-20 can be the voice of those who are absent at the G-20 which still seems wedded to the economic orthodoxy of the past.

Second: Credible macro-management of the economy: The preeminent role of government in setting and maintaining the proper macro-economic fundamentals is essential for any effective growth, as well as for a well-functioning competitive economy. The costs of severe austerity measures in a period of limited or zero growth is felt primarily by the poor and destitute. Sound government policies are essential to ensure social equity and welfare, limit market distortions and prevent

monopolies. This broad view of the role of government in society encompasses economics but also transcends it.

Third: Advancement of sustainable development:

Environment is not just an issue for the rich. It is about every child in every country having a right to clean air, clean water and fertile soils. It is about ensuring that all children should be secure from natural calamities and have food security throughout their lives. It is about educating girls and empowering women, and ensuring equity in the treatment of all citizens. It is about being conscious of our responsibility to our children and grandchildren. The Global South, having the vast majority of the population of the planet has a direct interest in promoting mitigation and adaptive measures that will ensure sustainable development and a secure future for their citizens. The Global South should take the lead in ensuring that such measures are not flouted by the Western powers who have been the prime culprits in the past for the imbalances being introduced in our climate and our global ecological systems.

Fourth: Advancement of good governance:

The Global South needs to endorse systematic approaches to the promotion of good governance, under their own guidance, not under western tutelage. Here we are not talking of parliamentary or presidential systems or whether parliament should be bicameral or a single

chamber, we are addressing the promotion of principles like transparency, accountability, free expression, free flow of information, participation and the rule of law. In fact, I would argue that Western style electoral politics will not be the best answer for many countries where ethnic identities are strong and religious tensions are rife. Possibilities of experimenting with hybrid systems that involve forms of selection other than conventional elections such as sortition and representative sampling should be tried.

Fifth: Facilitate the flow of knowledge and information: The future will require more access to open communications and information at a speed that will defy our current thinking, and that will exceed most of what we can imagine today. It is not just about availability of information, it is also about access to that information. It is also about new forms of free speech and Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) in the emerging digital age.

Sixth: The Promotion of Science and the Values of Science: The systematic collaboration of the countries of the Global South for the promotion of *capacity building for science, technology and innovation (STI)* would be mutually reinforcing to the free flow of information. Science for society is not just to produce consumable technology; it is also about commitment

to evidentiary-based regulation, and arbitration of disputes by scientific methods whenever possible.

Seventh: Promoting investment in human and social capital: Education and health and nutrition of persons are a primary competitive asset as well as being the best investment that societies can make; for it is essential for both equity and economy. But equally important is to strive to build up the shared values, the legitimacy of the institutions of mediation in a society, for that is the essential glue that holds societies together and allows them to function. That is their social capital.

Eighth: Nurture flexible institutions: The one common denominator of the global knowledge driven economy of the new millennium is the pace of change itself. The successful, competitive economies of the future, those that will be creating the jobs, and the prosperity for their people, will be those that ensure the flexibility of their institutions.

Envoi: Towards a New Global Paradigm

We need a new global paradigm, and the leaders of the Global South should make it their goal to construct it. They should not look only to their current national economic interests, but also to the interests of all humanity. That is how they will really construct a

system that is fundamentally different from the one that prevailed in the last century, and that they assembled to fight for its transformation.

The eight points described in the preceding section can, and should be, reformulated as a set of principles for the Global South in its next half century. I think that such a declaration of principles and objectives has the capacity to harness the potential of the rapidly evolving and diversifying South-South cooperation. It has the capacity to inspire national and international visions, and give meaning to actions by the countries of the Global south from the largest to the smallest. It has the ability to forge effective bonds between these disparate countries that are very different from what has prevailed in traditional North-South economic dealings.

I believe that these are some of the elements that can rally the developing countries that belong to the Global South into a meaningful unity of action despite their great diversity. That action needs such a platform of basic principles and objectives, which perhaps could even be formulated as a “*Charter of the Global South*” that can have a lasting value, and contribute to the struggle to build a better world for the entire human family, as we promote a culture of peace, justice and sustainable development for all.

CRAFTING STABILITY IN THE MIDDLE EAST*

Prologue

The horrors of *Da'ish* and *Al-Qaeda*, have reached such a level of barbarity and violence that we are unable to find the right words to describe them. Today, they have crossed the Mediterranean into Europe and their affiliates are challenging regimes anywhere and everywhere in the world. Their campaign of terror has also resulted in waves of refugees that are putting pressures on countries in the ME and in Europe. The chaotic situation in the ME, with full scale wars in Libya, Sudan, Somalia, Yemen, Syria and Iraq, in a vast swath around Egypt, Jordan and the Arabian Peninsula, with the involvement of Turkey and Iran, set the scene for this discussion.

There are some who would blame the West's actions from the crusades to colonialism to the creation of Israel to the more recent involvement in war in Iraq, not to mention the continuing incursions throughout

* "Crafting Stability in the Middle East". Essay published in *Newsweek Middle East* on 6 January 2016.

the Middle East both overt and covert. Further there are some who would see the current chaotic situation as the result of a well-designed conspiracy for the dismantling and balkanization of the Arab World, whose main features could be seen in such declarations as the value of “Creative Chaos”. But whatever truth there may be in any of these postulations, I believe that the current situation with the emergence of such forces as *Da'ish* has underlined the fact that the US and its allies confront a different kind of problem than they did five to ten years ago, and that they – and us who live in the Middle east – need a new approach to cope with the current wars and destruction and bring an end to the currents of extremism and violence and fashion some kind of stability in the Middle East. But how?

Our region is littered with the corpses of both well-intentioned and malevolent interventions. The region is really a medley of sects, territories, ethnicities and shifting political affiliations, so that the landscape is formed like a mosaic of hard, unyielding small pieces, each one glinting with its own color and character, and somehow solid and inflexible.

Three Scenarios that Failed

In the recent past, the US and its allies have tried three different ways of intervening in the ME. There was military intervention followed by massive presence in the field in the case of Iraq. Then there was support for an air campaign but no follow-up and no presence on the ground in the case of Libya. Then there was no military intervention and no direct involvement in the case of Syria. Arguably, all three led to disastrous results. The reasons, I believe, are different, but revolve around the timing of the intervention and its type. Sometimes focused, targeted diplomatic initiatives are best suited to the task, and bring the desired results: e.g. the Iran nuclear negotiations. Sometimes it is the absence of clear political objectives that moots the outcome of using military muscle, as happened arguably in Libya. And sometimes, it is the issue of the timing of an intervention rather than its type that counts most, as perhaps it could be said that there was a window in Syria in 2012 where intervention on the side of the “moderate” opposition might have been possible, but that window has since closed.

Today in every one of those cases, the US and its allies are confronted with terrible choices, and the best that can be done in almost every case is a sort of the

least-bad option...but a collection of least-bad options does not constitute a viable regional strategy.

A Different Approach

So let me posit a different approach. One that works with the regional powers, starting with Egypt, and that deploys all the tools of pressure and seduction, all the instruments of economic and military muscle but in service of an overarching diplomatic initiative that will have parallel teams involved in intense diplomatic discussions, each addressing a major hot-spot and each subjected to an overall review from the oversight of teams around the top decision-makers. It is essential to recognize the conflicting goals that many of the protagonists have. Thus if the US and Iran have an interest in supporting Iraq, they are at loggerheads over relations with Israel and divergent in Syria where Iran supports Bashar Al Assad. The US and Saudi Arabia may want to defeat *Da'ish*, but they differ on the support that should be given to Shia forces to achieve that objective. The US may want Turkey to support the Pesh-Merga forces in their confrontation with *Da'ish*, but Turkey fears that they would strengthen a call for an independent Kurdistan which would threaten Turkey's own territorial integrity...and so on...

Therefore the conventional approach of focusing on one hot-spot a time will not work, for it creates contradictions between actors who could be allies on one set of issues and enemies in another theater where fighting is still going on in parallel.

Military action will still be required, in order to deprive *Da'ish* and *Al-Qaeda* of an independently held territory or land base, and to degrade their military capabilities as well as to allow humanitarian action to reach the many victims in these various battlefields. Intense coordination and intelligence-sharing between all parties will be required to prevent terrorist action elsewhere. Issues of how to guarantee the political liberties that we desire for our citizens while we still provide the modicum of security that they deserve raise important questions of “democratic Security” that deserve our attention, but that is a separate discussion for another day.

So the proposal I am advancing of deploying military and economic strength in service of a major diplomatic offensive to be carried out by multiple parallel high-level teams under the active guidance of the major international, regional and local leaders is qualitatively different and, I believe, deserves to be tried. For clarity, the international powers are the US, Europe and Russia,

and the regional powers are Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Iran, Turkey and Israel.

Rules for Action to Stabilize the ME

- Be clear that you will exclude from any consideration the continuation of *Da'ish* or *Al-Qaeda* in any way, shape or form.
- Beware of all the other Islamist political movements or jihadist groups who claim not to be associated with *Da'ish*.

Then

- Look at the combatants within a specific country or theater and not those from outside, and
- If one side has a clear preponderance of being the likely winner, settle with it even if you do not particularly like that party.
- Don't bring another fanatic group to fight a fanatic group.
- Support people who are on the ground and who are defending their homelands (e.g. Yazidis, Kurds).
- Seek a political settlement that brings in ALL the groups in the territory and ALL the external parties that have a stake in this particular fight.

- Understand the intersecting agendas of each of the combatants and of their external backers.
- Understand the overarching considerations (e.g. Iran and the Shia Arabs vs. Saudi Arabia and the Sunni Arabs) and how they manifest themselves in the local conflicts.
- Create parallel negotiating teams in all the conflicts so that one party can “win” in one case and “lose” in another and then linkages can be developed.
- Try to develop a win-win for the external sponsors and backers of local combatants.
- Solutions will have to include a massive dose of federalism in all the existing nation states if these nations are not to be divided and further Balkanized.
- Federalism will require clarity as to how to split the national resources (e.g., oil or off-shore gas).
- Solutions will need separation of fighting forces on the ground, followed by political power-sharing arrangements.
- Ultimately, the global and regional powers will have to provide multi-party guarantees to maintain the status quo after the settlement for at least five to ten years, possibly placing multi-lateral forces (possibly including big-power forces) for a long time

if required, to ensure that the solutions are given enough time to take hold.

- Try to “lock-in” the agreements reached, with their guarantees, through a form of UN-based endorsements. For all its failures, the UN remains the only body that has some kind of international legitimacy, and which could be a forum for bringing on Board the support of China, Japan and other global players who are not directly involved in the chaotic wars of the Middle East.

This will require a major endeavor both politically and militarily, and it will require the attention and commitment of the major decision-makers in the world, but at least it would have the saving grace of being a deployment of diplomatic talent and military and economic muscle that is devised within an overall strategy.

Beyond Politics and Military Action

But such geo-political strategies address only two facets of the problem: the political and military stresses that are tearing the region apart. Such a program must be complemented by three other major initiatives, focused on governance; development and culture.

First, Governance: to build on the short-term stability achieved by that geopolitical straitjacket, the world should assist in institutional capacity building and nurturing the structures of governance in order to promote longer term political stability and the emergence of inclusive and more just societies than those that are now falling apart;

Second, Development: Socio-economic development, both locally and regionally, through a series of interlocking initiatives that would promote properly sequenced macro policies and bottom-up initiatives and support that by the provision of adequate credits for rebuilding the ravaged landscapes of our region; and

Third: Culture: A cultural response to the continued appeal of extremism and violence must be developed if pluralism, dialogue and understanding are to spread among the disenfranchised and marginalized populations of the region. We, the intellectuals of the region, have a major responsibility to ask ourselves why did our societies become such fertile ground for extremism and violence, and to undertake sweeping cultural initiatives to change the political and religious discourse, and promote multi-layered identities that are brought together under a big tent of the (now federal) national state. I am happy to say the Library of

Alexandria has started such a program in 2015, and we expect to have some results within three to five years.

Conclusions

The stability that will emerge from such arrangements is likely to be initially very stiff, and potentially brittle. But the populations concerned are tired of conflict, tired of extremism, and will welcome an alternative vision that is based on inclusion and equity, recognizes and even revels in diversity, that promotes stability and opens the path to prosperity for those who have the drive and ambition to succeed. And for a truly lasting stability in the region it will be essential to also bring the Israeli-Palestinian conflict to a conclusion, for lack of progress on the Palestinian front remains the main argument for those who advocate violence over diplomacy.

Let me return to the credits I mentioned in discussing socio-economic development. Here, I believe that two regional funds should be set up: One that could finance these massive infrastructure rebuilding projects, and one that caters to the bottom up micro initiatives. This would involve putting external funds with some resources from the Sovereign Funds of the region in a matching formula. These two funds can be managed by

the Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development (AFESD) which could co-finance all these projects with many IFIs. This would give the populations of the region a sense of ownership of the process of rebuilding infrastructures that are quasi-nonexistent because of war or prior neglect. A well-designed massive rebuilding program can also help in boosting local employment in all these troubled lands.

None of this is going to be easy, but it seems to me to be the most promising means of stabilizing the region. And guess what? As a bonus, a successful endeavor on this front would also enormously reduce the tide of escaping refugees and the pressures that they generate on the immigration policies of many countries. So, let us move forward on this new approach to “Crafting Stability in the Middle East”.



**TAMING THE WILD MARKETS:
STEPS TOWARDS A HUMANE GLOBALIZATION***

A Time for change

The terrible crisis that hit the western financial markets in 2008 has marked the end of an unprecedented era of naive belief that free capital flows and unfettered markets are the cure for all the world's ills; that the private sector was going to solve all problems, if only governments would get out of the way, forgetting that monopolies, greed, and abuses of all kinds can occur if those entrusted with managing people's money, and assets, are not supervised and held accountable for their actions. In so doing they falsely invoked the authority of

* "Taming the Wild Markets: Steps towards a Humane Globalization". Updated version of an address delivered at the Panel for "Synergies to Master the Global Crisis" at the Dialogue and Cooperation for Change – Eurasian interdependencies on Overcoming the Crisis – 3rd CGDC Annual Meeting in Vienna, Austria on 4 December 2013.

Adam Smith¹, and they took the world, or at least the OECD countries, into the worst crisis since the Great Depression.

But their positions were founded on a biased and inaccurate reading of Smith, and the legacy of economic thinking, from Smith to Keynes. Keynes, of course, argued that well designed and well-timed government interventions could temper the worst impacts of the business cycle rather than exacerbate it. No, those advocating policies of trickle down, lower taxes and deregulation and reduced surveillance of the private sector all follow a political agenda, supported by some economists, and represented in the Washington consensus of the 1980s, and the thrust of the Reagan-Thatcher years to increase reliance on the private sector, and reduce the role of government. If those views had validity in the excessive regulation and red-tape that existed in the 1980s, pushing these same ideological arguments in western countries today is really to swing the pendulum much too far in the other direction. The results are clear in the unprecedented scale of the

¹ Adam Smith was a true visionary and so completely has his thinking been accepted today that we often forget just how revolutionary he was. He was also a profound thinker about ethics as much as society, and his thoughts on “The Theory of Moral Sentiments” were important in their day, even if his lasting contribution is seen to be “The Wealth Of Nations” published in 1776.

debacle of 2007-2008, some of whose consequences are still with us today.

Adam Smith was a visionary and an incredibly perceptive person who correctly understood that the real wealth of nations was in the production of farmers and artisans and in the transactions of traders, and not in the accumulation of gold and silver in the coffers of the king. He also recognized the value of the market mechanism referring to his now famous image of an “invisible hand”².

But Smith also recognized that public goods will not be produced by the private sector, and that the public must take on that responsibility for the benefit of the nation³.

² Incidentally, here is the actual quote on the invisible hand: “As every individual, therefore, endeavours as much as he can...to employ his capital... He generally, indeed, neither intends to promote the public interest, nor knows how much he is promoting it. ...he intends only his own gain, and he is in this, as in many other cases, led by an invisible hand to promote an end which was no part of his intention”.

³ Smith also recognized that public goods would not be financed or undertaken by the private sector: “...[the state is responsible] for erecting and maintaining those public institutions and those public works, which though they may be in the highest degree advantageous to a great society, are, however, of such a nature, that the profit could never repay the expense to any individual or small number of individuals, and which it, therefore, cannot be expected that any individual or small number of individuals should erect or maintain.” He gave as example of a public good the general education of all the people.

Finally, and perhaps most prescient of all, given the mess we are in with the banking and financial sector today, it is amazing to hear how he called for the proper regulation of the banking sector over 230 years ago. Adam Smith offered these powerful comments on the necessity of prudential regulation of banking, even if it appeared to be a limitation on personal freedom, which he advocated and defended:

To restrain private people, it may be said, from receiving in payment the promissory notes of a banker, for any sum whether great or small, when they themselves are willing to receive them; or, to restrain a banker from issuing such notes, when all his neighbors are willing to accept of them, is a manifest violation of that natural liberty which it is the proper business of law, not to infringe, but to support.

Such regulations may, no doubt, be considered as in some respects a violation of natural liberty. But those exertions of the natural liberty of a few individuals, which might endanger the security of the whole society, are, and ought to be, restrained by the laws of all governments; of the most free, as well as of the most despotical. The obligation of building party walls, in order to prevent the communication of fire, is a violation of natural liberty, exactly of the same kind with the regulations of the banking trade which are here proposed.

So let me challenge the assertions of those who claim to follow in Smith's footsteps and want only to deregulate the private sector. Let me state the case for a new kind of globalization, one that would advance human welfare as it promotes sustainable development.

Lessons From the Past

...exploitation of the world market [has] given a cosmopolitan character to production and consumption in every country. ... All old-fashioned industries have been destroyed. They are dislodged by new industries, whose introduction becomes a life and death question for all civilized nations...In place of old wants, we find new wants, requiring for their satisfaction the products of distant lands and climes. In place of the old local and national seclusion and self-sufficiency, we have intercourse in every direction, universal inter-dependence of nations.

Contemporary as they sound, these words do not come from the present. They are from Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels' *The Communist Manifesto* of 1848. The pangs we are feeling today are remarkably similar to those felt in the industrial revolution two centuries ago. The question before us is whether we have learned from that experience to design a more humane way of

dealing with the inevitable wrenching that accompanies such processes of change.

To avoid repeating the problems of the industrial revolution, we must harness the emerging universal values of our common humanity, and create a coalition of the caring.

So what sort of key lessons have we learned from that terrible experience of 2008 and beyond? Perhaps we can list the following fundamental points:

- The Market is a good servant but a bad master. We need to temper the ruthless allocative efficiency of the market mechanism with a caring and nurturing society.
- Markets are seldom perfectly competitive. They need regulation to prevent monopolization, the adverse impacts of asymmetrical knowledge, institutional weaknesses and other market imperfections.
- The old debate about state power versus free markets needs to be changed. We do not want free markets, we want competitive markets, and these need a strong legal system and a powerful state machinery to enforce contracts, criminalize insider trading, fight monopoly and monopsony, and limit the negative impacts of duopolies and oligopolies.

- The private sector, although it should remain the primary engine of economic activity, will not invest in public goods. The governments will have to do that.
- We must recognize that we do not function in a vacuum. The economic transactions we undertake have major effects on society and on the environment. Thus, it is important to internalize the full social and environmental costs of our decisions. Therefore the costs of local and global externalities (e.g. carbon emissions) should be factored in when making investment decisions.
- We must rectify our national accounts to ensure that the environmental impacts of production decisions are fully calculated. We cannot continue to have a system that counts a forest standing as zero and give it a positive value only if it is chopped down!
- At present much is mismeasured in our national accounts, notably the unremunerated work done by women in most societies. Furthermore, national income accounts only look at flows, not stocks. We should measure the growth in our capital stock including natural capital, as well as human and social capital, not just produced assets which are usually the conventional economic measure of capital stock.

All of that is possible, and some of the world's most insightful economists are working on these issues. This refined view of economics will not diminish the vibrancy of the entrepreneurial spirit, but it will help make new investments environmentally friendly and socially responsible.

Preparedness at the Country Level

To respond to shocks and make effective use of new opportunities, governments must have effective action in some key areas:

First, new structures are needed for global economic decision-making: International firms can reposition themselves in accounting terms anywhere on the planet, and thereby avoid taxation and regulation by their governments. We need an effective international machinery to control the chaotic structure of our markets and avoid the problems of the recent past. Furthermore, with the potential of money laundering, drug and arms trafficking, terrorist financing and other criminal enterprises, we need to see more clearly than we currently do in this rapidly changing world we live in.

Second: governments must undertake credible macro-management of the economy: The preeminent role of government is in smoothing out the business

cycles, and ensuring that the cumulative effect of economic transactions does not lead to a widening gap between the rich and the poor. At present the gap is wide and growing and it has done so in tandem with much of the deregulation that people claimed was necessary for economic growth. Furthermore, in redressing imbalances, the burden of adjustment has invariably fallen on the poorest and most vulnerable members of society. Social, as well as environmental, aspects are a necessary component of public policy, not only for the inherent justice of such a set of concerns, but also for the sound functioning of the economy and for putting it on a sustainable growth path. The costs of severe austerity measures in a period of limited or zero growth is felt primarily by the poor and destitute. It is that just balance that governments should seek to reach and maintain. It is something that requires judgment as well as political skill, but it is an essential part of designing sound policies for the future.

Third: flexible institutions: As we enter the knowledge-driven global economy of the new millennium, the one characteristic that is increasingly dominant is the pace of change itself. To generate prosperity and create jobs all societies will have to have much more flexible and responsive institutions than they have had to date. Legislation, regulation and social

participation must all adjust to that need for flexibility and adaptability.

Fourth, facilitate the flow of knowledge and information: The future will require more access to open communications and information at a speed that will defy our current thinking and that will exceed most of what we can today imagine.

Fifth, investment in human and social capital: Education, health and nutrition of persons are a primary competitive asset as well as the best investment that societies can make. For both equity and economy, it is essential. But equally important is to strive to build up the shared values, the legitimacy of the institutions of mediation in a society, for that is the essential glue that holds societies together and allows them to function. That is their social capital.

We Need a New Global Paradigm

The capitalist system, the most creative and productive system devised by humanity, is still in need of a profound humanist critique. There are many people, this author included, who believe that the presence of hunger amidst plenty, and other social problems are NOT a necessary price to pay for the robustness of the economy. Many of us believe that the ruthless allocative

efficiency of the market must be tempered by a caring and nurturing society.

There are those who still argue for “trickle down”... But, as John Kenneth Galbraith once said: “Trickle-down theory – the less than elegant metaphor that if one feeds the horse enough oats, some will pass through to the road for the sparrows.”

We need insightful critiques of the global markets of the post-modern, knowledge-based capitalist society of the 21st century. These global markets do not adequately recognize environmental, human and social capital. There is a real need for such a critique to redress the imbalances in thinking that would have us accept rising inequality, marginalization and poverty of the weak and even reduced economic growth and consumption, as an acceptable sacrifice to the altar of fiscal rectitude...

Regretfully, that is what is advocated by those who still consider that the holy trinity of fiscal balance, trade balance and (where it applies) exchange rate balance, to be the essential goals, and who try to achieve them by a standardized recipe of deregulation, trade liberalization and privatization...they are carry-overs from the by-gone era of the so-called “Washington Consensus” and the Reagan-Thatcher policies of the 1980s.

Today there are those – in the euro zone for example – who still argue that this vision of (rather .even at the cost of unemployment rates that exceed a quarter of the labor force, and which among youth reach astronomical levels of over 50%, not counting those who got so discouraged by the long lasting character of this condition that they stopped looking for work, and therefore do not appear in the statistics.

Free Markets and Competitive Markets

I would like to ban the word “free markets” from our lexicon, because it has been misinterpreted in so many quarters. A totally “free market” is an invitation to predators. What we really mean is “competitive markets”.

All competitive markets require an effective state apparatus behind them: property rights, binding contracts and effective judiciary, to name but a few. They also require surveillance and transparency with properly audited financial data. Insider trading is criminalized and prosecuted. Anti-trust laws to prevent monopoly are in place, and are enforced.

Envoi

We have begun to recognize the need for change. We have taken the first steps in a long journey of transformation. We have defined the post 2015 Sustainable Development

Goals (SDGs) that will ensure that the benefits of education, health and nutrition reach all the human family. And we have committed ourselves to a path to limit the risks of climate change to the planet.

It is time to redesign the paradigm of international governance to introduce a more proper reflection of the power distribution of the world, and the ethical representation of the inhabitants of the planet than that which was designed into the UN at the end of WW2. The G-20 is an improvement over the current distribution of the Security Council, but it is not an adequate substitute.

It is time that ethical views govern how we judge the policies we adopt, in full cognizance of their human and social impacts.

It is time to protect the advantages of the global and local “competitive markets”, and nurture equity as much as innovation and entrepreneurship.

It is time that our top political and economic decision-makers act wisely to achieve all of that, in keeping with the oft-quoted words, “go forth unto the world and fashion those wise constraints that make people free”.



ISLAMIC SHARIA LAW: MODERN CONCEPTS IN ANCIENT RULINGS*

Introduction

Regretfully, most westerners when they hear the word “Shariah” recoil with horror. The word evokes images of beheadings, beatings and various forms of barbarous behavior that most people would shudder at. So pervasive is this attitude, even among well-educated persons, that I find it necessary to explain the historical and conceptual truths about Shariah, and most western people are stunned by what I have to say.

So let me address in this brief essay two major points about which there should be no confusion: What is Sharia? And how was it applied?

* “Islamic Sharia Law: Modern Concepts in Ancient Rulings”. Extract from Study delivered at the Conference on democracy for the 21st Century, organized by the Bibliotheca Alexandrina with the collaboration of the Club de Madrid and the NGIC. 10 December 2015.

First: What Is Sharia?

Sharia is the way that Muslim societies are enjoined to organize their affairs and in keeping with the teachings of Islam. It depends on the rulings of men, who are learned in the law, the past rulings and master the language and are committed to the truth. In that sense it has some parallel with the ecclesiastical law that evolved in Europe, but it is practiced by jurists who have wide knowledge of the law and certain basic instructions to follow. These instructions include:

- To be aware of the texts, for that which is not explicitly forbidden is allowed.
- To be aware not just of past rulings by eminent jurists, but also the context in which these rulings were made. Changing contexts require different rulings.
- That there are objectives (Maqasid Al Shariah) that are all important, and that the objectives, not a specific means to achieve them at some particular time, should guide contemporary decisions. The objectives include the protection of life; the protection of property; the protection of the right to worship; the protection of family and home; the protection of reputation as well as the more general objectives such as liberty, justice and dignity. It has

been argued that the importance to be given to different objectives can vary from society to society and from period to another historical period.

In the end, the purpose of Sharia, which is the law that should govern people's affairs in Muslim societies, is recorded in a cumulative corpus of learned juridical rulings. It is not sacred law, and is the result of the work of people, and therefore subject to debate and discussion like any other human effort. It is intended for the benefit of society and the propagation of justice and mercy. Indeed, even a purist jurist like Ibn Al Qayyim has written:

“You need to know that Shariah is all justice, all fairness and all mercy. Anything that lacks justice, fairness or mercy has nothing to do with Shariah, even when it becomes connected with it through interpretation”.

But what can we say of the actual practice of Sharia? Has it been generally progressive or retrograde?

Second: How was Sharia applied?

What can we say about Sharia law? It was so progressive that some of its aspects in the seventh century of our era are still remarkably modern by western standards

in the 21st century! This stunning claim is supported by remarkable evidence. So, let me go to a few years after the death of the prophet Muhammad, when Islam exploded out of Arabia onto the world scene, and a remarkable and towering figure stands out: Umar Ibn Al-Khattab.

It is unfortunate that the West does not know much about Umar, a brilliant jurist and a most remarkable ruler by any standard, but certainly a most extraordinary figure in his day in the seventh century of our era.

Umar was a close companion of the Prophet Muhammad and was the second caliph of Islam, taking charge two years after the death of the prophet. His predecessor, Abu-Bakr, had consolidated Islam's hold on the Arabian Peninsula, and it was during the ten year reign of Umar (634–644 CE) that Islam was transformed from a local phenomenon to a vast empire.

On the Rules of War

Indeed in these conquests the Muslim armies were remarkably disciplined and in some cases the cities and territories passed under Muslim sovereignty by treaty agreements. This we know from the entry of Muslims into Jerusalem in the 7th century under Umar, where he gave the Christians of Jerusalem a very benign agreement

or contract (the Umariyya Covenant), safeguarding all Christian churches allowing them to continue to manage their affairs. The Muslim law would only apply in cases where there was conflict between Muslims and Christians. Moved by the generosity of the offer, the patriarch asked Umar to pray in the Church of the Holy Sepulcher and Umar refused. The patriarch asked ‘Do we not pray to the same God?’ and Umar said: ‘yes, but if I pray in your church my followers will turn it into a mosque’. They crossed the street and prayed in a small vacant plot of land. Now, this is where the Mosque of Umar stands in Jerusalem.

Again, that same discipline was seen at the time of Saladin the Great (Salah El Din El Ayouby, 1138–1193), who after the battle of Hattin in 1189, entered Jerusalem, and gave safe conduct to all the Christians including the King of Jerusalem Guy de Lusignan and his wife Sibylla. He only executed Raynald de Chatillon who had personally killed Saladin’s sister. Indeed, it was under Saladin’s protection that the Jewish community reentered Jerusalem at the end of the 12th century. Despite the crusaders slaughters and mass murders – for they killed men, women and children when they conquered Jerusalem in 1099 – Saladin granted amnesty and free passage to all common Catholics and even to the defeated Christian army. The Greek

Orthodox Christians were treated even better, because they opposed the Crusades.

From the time of Umar, there were laws governing what was allowed in war. These laws, operative at the time of Umar, were the prototypes of the Geneva Conventions that the West would come to in the 20th century. Already in the seventh century, Muslims ruled that there could be no attack on non-combatants, no destruction of property, no taking of hostages, and no environmental destruction: no cutting down of palm trees and no depletion of wells. This is unbelievably progressive, especially for seventh century warfare!

Umar's Letter to the Qadi

But the most stunning example of that progressive jurisprudence is Umar's letter to the Qadi (written in 639 CE). It is a one page letter of instructions that Umar gave a scholar he was appointing as a judge. It is a remarkable document, which with great brevity instructs the judge in how to dispense justice. It is so modern in its concepts that few westerners can believe it when they see it, for it deals with many issues that contemporary western jurisprudence is still struggling with.

Umar Ibn Al Khattab's philosophy was incredibly progressive for someone who ruled in the seventh century. Many of his rulings are remarkably modern even to this day. For example:

- **The presumption of innocence:** Umar's instructions to the judge started with the sentence: "the burden of proof is on the accuser, from the accused, only the declaration of innocence under oath is required". This is unbelievable in the 7th century, if we look back at the history of jurisprudence throughout the middle ages, people would use torture to extract confessions from the accused.
- **Justice delayed is justice denied:** Umar instructed that time must be fixed, for justice that is not swift is not fair. The rich can afford to wait, the poor cannot.
- **Confronting the accuser:** Umar demanded that the accused should be able to confront his accuser, before witnesses and a judge. This principle was essential to ensure fairness in the opinions of the judge after hearing the opinions of all concerned.
- **Equality before the law:** Umar instructs the judge to treat all equally in the court, and to accept the testimony of all witnesses equally.

- **Be willing to reconsider:** Umar says to the judge, and do not be afraid to reverse an earlier judgment if upon reflection you find that it is unjust.

Four other Rulings by Umar

There are four other famous rulings by Umar that are not explicitly listed in his brief letter to the Qadi, but which also deserve mention here. These are:

- **Evidence gathered illegally is not acceptable as evidence:** Umar ruled that an accusation made by a person breaching the rights of privacy, was void; you cannot break the law in the name of maintaining the law. This is of course to this day a major issue in law enforcement in advanced countries such as the United States where questions about the rights of due process and the guarantees of adequate systems of gathering evidence were already foreshadowed by Umar almost 1450 years ago.
- **The State should care for all its citizens, Muslims and non-Muslims:** Umar extended the social security system of his time (public treasury, alms and taxes, revenues of which were distributed to the poor and destitute) to Muslims and non-Muslims alike. He was named Al-Farouk (the Just) by his non-Muslim subjects.

- **Rulers have to have more demanding standards of conduct:** Umar was severe, he challenged his judges and governors with **conflict of interest laws**. But he was even more demanding of himself. He insisted to live in poverty, saying to his wives and family that it is among the poor that the burdens of life's difficulties and the impact of shortages are felt most immediately and acutely.
- **Justice must be tempered by Mercy:** Finally, Umar was aware that justice that is not tempered by mercy is not just. He could also be remarkably merciful, and he recognized underlying attenuating circumstances. In the year in which there was a famine throughout Arabia (the year of al-Ramada), he decreed that no severe punishments should be enacted because no one knew if people who stole something did so out of need or not, and he could not review every single case personally.

The Overwhelming Importance of Context

Most amazingly, Umar ruled – a mere few years after the death of the prophet – that a verse in the Quran, which had been applied by the Prophet and by the first caliph Abu Bakr did not need to be applied because **conditions had changed!** He withheld a share of the

alms that went to particular tribes and peoples – the Muallafat Qulubahum – to give it to the poor and destitute instead. He did that arguing that conditions had changed and that Islam was now a vast and powerful state.

What courage to recognize that jurisprudence must respond to existing conditions and not follow past practices regardless of who established these practices. If only our contemporary jurists had an iota of the courage of Umar!

Reflecting on that body of jurisprudence coming out of the small village of Al Madina in Arabia in the seventh century of our era is indeed eye-opening. Far from thinking of it as retrograde, there is much in Sharia that lends itself to contemporary and modern interpretations, if Muslims today were to have but a small fraction of the courage of those early Muslims, and challenge the extremist few who want to appropriate the name of Islam and destroy its legacy to serve their narrow retrograde and indefensible political agendas.

After Umar

After Umar, and throughout the middle ages, Muslims would go on to build vast and tolerant empires that promoted learning, science and philosophy. The

writings of Plato and Aristotle were translated and studied, and they were referred to as “al-Hakeemain” meaning the two wise men. No one burned or banned their books, instead they were taught and discussed.

Andalusia was a marvelous mix of different communities, where Jews, Christians and Muslims consorted together and produced great poetry, architecture, science, philosophy and literature. This contrasts with the conditions imposed by the Catholics after the defeat of the Arabs in Cordoba (1492), not to mention the infamous inquisition that followed (The Spanish Inquisition set up by King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella of Castile in 1478 with the approval of Pope Sixtus IV). The Roman Inquisition, set up by Pope Paul III in 1542, supervised all the inquisitions against heretics, and the most famous trial was that of Galileo, 1633.

Third: Some Concluding Thoughts

It is interesting to reflect on the fact that *the Letter of Umar to the Qadi*, dated 639 CE, was a thousand years before the trial of Galileo (1633 CE).

So in our discussions between westerners and Muslims we need to be reminded of these many stories and asked to reflect and to ponder before we assume a western

superiority based on the belief that the values we hold dear, these profoundly humanistic values, are purely a western creation, and that they cannot exist in Muslim societies of the 21st century, when the early Muslims had already done so much, so long ago. Surely, contemporary Muslims should not be intimidated by the rabid few who hold to their own narrow and vicious interpretations and insist on trying to impose it on others.

We contemporary Muslims should reclaim that great heritage *and transcend it*. After all, it is not what Umar said some 1450 years ago that counts, it is what a man of his caliber would say if he were with us today confronting our problems in the 21st century. In that context, I am sure that we have much to learn from the vast strides that western society – as well as other eastern societies – have taken in the last few centuries. We are today all citizens of the global village and all part of the polyglot world community that shares the responsibility for what happens on this planet as it struggles to bring about a more equitable and just world where all may live in dignity. But as we Muslims take our place in the consort of peoples and nations that design the future for our children, we should have the confidence that our heritage has much in it that is both wise and inspiring and worthy of our study and reflection.

PLURALISM, FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION, AND ISLAM*

The Legacy of the Arabs and Muslims

Contrary to the expectations of many, including the self-appointed guardians of purity in contemporary militant Islamic movements, the historical record of Islam is one of tolerance, openness to the other, and co-existence. The Muslim culture in the period of its dominance over vast parts of West Asia and North Africa and during its seven centuries of presence in Andalusia, was a pioneer in cementing the values of equality and freedom, especially in comparison to prevailing practices during these historical periods. The Arab Muslims, exploding out of Arabia in the seventh century, spread Islam and its Culture in this vast region, rapidly becoming a minority among Muslims. They brought forth a culture that liberated the human being from the delusion of racism, and prepared society to accept freedom of belief and emphasized it in its practices.

* “Pluralism, Freedom of Expression, and Islam”. Drawn from the book by Ismail Serageldin, *Al-Tabhadi* (The Challenge), General Egyptian Book Organization, Egypt: 2015.

Here, it is pertinent to counter the views of the contemporary Muslim bigots, by referring to the evidence of the historical record and by citing textual proofs from the Holy Quran and the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad on the one hand, and to review the evidence of the well-documented historical practices, on the other. I will address three broad Questions:

- Freedom of Belief and co-existence,
- Freedom of Inquiry and the Values of Science, and
- Freedom of Expression and Offensive Speech.

Together these three topics will make the case that despite the horrible extremism and violence that we see today, despite the intolerant views of many, the history of Islam is one of openness and freedom.

First: On Freedom of Belief and Co-existence

Simply stated, Islam's ruling principle is freedom, the most important manifestation of which is the freedom to be a Muslim or not, to believe or not to believe. As is well known, the Holy Quran states:

“There is no compulsion in religion. Verily, the Right Path has become distinct from the wrong path” [Al-Baqarah 2:256].

Furthermore, God instructs the Prophet Muhammad on dealing with the disbelievers:

“(1) Say: “Oh, you who disbelieve! (2) “I do not worship that which you worship. (3) “Nor do you worship That Which I worship. (4) “Nor will I worship that which you have been worshipping, (5) “Neither will you worship That Which I worship. (6)”To you your religion and to me mine.” [Al-Kafirun (The Disbelievers) 109: 1-6]

Can there be a more direct and clearer instruction to co-exist with the disbelievers than: “To you your religion and to me mine.”? In addition, God instructs the Prophet that he will not be able to convert all people, not even all his close family and those he loves, and that in no way should he compel them to convert.

“It is true that you will not be able to guide every one, whom you love; but God guides those whom He will and He knows best those who receive guidance”. [Al-Qasas 28:56]

“And had your Lord willed, those on earth would have believed, all of them together. So, will you (O Muhammad) then compel mankind, until they become believers?” [Yunus 10:99].

So, to believe or not to believe, is a private matter between the person and God, and each person is

responsible for the choices he/she makes. Judgment is by the Almighty in the hereafter, not here on earth at the hands of some self-appointed defender of the faith.

So what about the wars that the Prophet Muhammad and the Muslims fought against Quraish and their allies? These were defensive wars against those people who had been violent towards the believers, forced them into exile, taken all their belongings and refused them compensation. They had even tried to murder the prophet himself. But even then, the Quran gives a very clear instruction to go back to peace and co-existence if the enemy is inclined to co-exist:

“And if they incline to peace, then you (also) incline to it, and put (your) trust in Allah. Indeed, He (is) All-Hearer, All-Knower”. [Al-Anfal 8:61]

Indeed, the instruction towards co-existence and the value of diversity is addressed to all people not just those who believe. The Holy Quran underlines the wisdom of celebrating human diversity far from the illusions of racial or religious domination in the lines that read:

“O mankind, indeed We have created you from male and female and made you peoples and tribes that you may know one another. Indeed, the most

noble of you in the sight of God is the most righteous of you". [*Al-Hujurāt 49:13*]

What about the wars of Apostasy, Hurub Al-Riddah, that broke out between the Muslims and those who declared that they were no longer Muslims immediately after the death of Muhammad? That I believe was a political war between those who wanted to keep the Muslim State created by Muhammad (who before his death had unified the tribes of Arabia into one Muslim State and declared a general amnesty to his bitterest enemies), and those who would tear it apart and return to tribal fiefdoms and inter-tribal warfare. It is in that political context that we can understand the decision of the companions of the prophet that those who rejected Islam (apostates) should be killed. Here, the matter had no relation to freedom of thought; Riddah meant switching sides in the midst of a hot war. Even today in the highly tolerant Western countries if a soldier in the field of battle switches sides and starts to kill his companions, it would be considered treason and would not be looked upon as an exercise in freedom of thought. To take this precedent out of context and argue today that death should be the penalty for anyone who wants to convert from Islam to another religion is an absurdity.

And even in these vicious conflicts of the wars of apostasy, which lasted some 18 months, the instruction to seek peace given to the Prophet prevailed. The moment the conflict was over, the Arabian tribes were reunited, and the Muslim state recreated, with all of the tribes as full members of the community.

How can contemporary bigots go against all this and insist that they have the right to attack and even kill non-Muslims, or Muslims who do not agree with them on their particular views of what the correct interpretation of Islam should be?

Without getting into much detail here, since this is known among true scholars of Islamic history and culture, all texts unite to resist ethnic intolerance and uphold the values of acceptance, equality and recognition of the Other. Indeed, I believe that the textual evidence is conclusive when it comes to proving Islam's respect of freedom of faith, opinion and expression. Belief remains a private matter where personal freedom is neither subject to discussion, assessment, approval or prohibition.

Furthermore, the historical practices of Islamic culture, particularly during times of political and doctrinal conflict, as shown in places as disparate as Andalusia in Europe, Abbasid Baghdad in its earlier

periods, and Mughal India, attest to the inclusiveness of Islamic society.

Second: On freedom of Inquiry and the Values of Science¹

There is a great Arab and Muslim tradition of science and tolerance that needs to be better known in the West. Indeed, throughout the dark ages it was the Muslims who held up the torch of rationality and reason, while Europe was in the throes of bigotry and intolerance.

Centuries before Bacon, Descartes and Galileo, Ibn Al-Haytham (10th C) laid down the rules of the empirical approach, describing how the scientific method should operate through observation, measurement, experiment and conclusion:

“We start by observing reality... We then proceed by increasing our research and measurement, subjecting premises to criticism, and being cautious in drawing conclusions... In all we do, our purpose should be ... the search for truth, not support of opinions”².

¹ This section draws from my address to the US National Academy of Sciences in 2011 upon receiving their highest honor, the Public Welfare Medal.

² Ibn Al-Haytham, *Kitab Al-Manadhir*, 10th century.

Ibn Al-Haytham was not tried or tortured as would happen to free thinkers in Europe during the Middle Ages. But even more relevant is the story of a contemporary of Ibn Al-Haytham, the great Arab poet Abul-Alaa Al-Maari. He was a blind poet in 10th century Syria, who lived defenseless in a little village between Aleppo and Damascus, and who wrote violent attacks against religion and God, the prophets, the Bible and the Quran. Not only was he not harmed by anyone, but he was also even recognized by his contemporaries for his talent as a poet, and his standing as a linguist, even as they disagreed with his religious views...

Thus did the ancient Muslims tolerate differences of opinion, even in matters of belief. Likewise, listen to the voice of Ibn Al-Nafis (13th century) on accepting the contrarian view, subject only to the test of evidence and rational analysis.

“When hearing something unusual, do not preemptively reject it, for that would be folly. Indeed, horrible things may be true, and familiar and praised things may prove to be lies.”¹

This is the Muslim tradition that must be revived if the Arab World, Muslim and non-Muslim alike,

¹ Ibn Al-Nafis, *Sharh' Ma'na Al Qanun*, 13th century.

will indeed join the ranks of the advanced societies of our time. Rejecting politicized religiosity, and reviving these traditions would promote the values of science in our societies.

To the youth, enamored with new technologies or simply seeking a better economic future, we say: remember science and the scientific method, for it is scientific insight and knowledge that give birth to technology. We must be the producers of knowledge, not just the consumers of technology. That will not happen unless we open our minds to science and the scientific approach, and open our hearts to the values of science.

What are these *values of science* that I keep returning to as the basis for enhancing human capabilities and ensuring public welfare?

As Bronowski observed more than half a century ago, the enterprise of science requires the adoption of certain values: Truth, honor, teamwork, constructive subversiveness, engagement with the other, freedom, imagination, and a method for the arbitration of disputes. The values of science are adhered to by its practitioners with a rigor that shames other professions.

Truth: Any scientist who manufactures his or her data is ostracized forever from the scientific community. She

or he may err in interpreting the data, but no one can accept fabrication of data. In no other field of human activity is this commitment to truth so absolute.

Honor: Scientists reject plagiarism. To give each his or her due, is essential, a sentiment well captured in Newton's statement that, "if I have seen farther than most, it is because I have stood on the shoulders of giants".

Teamwork has become essential in most fields of science. And the essence of teamwork is to ensure that all the members of the team receive the recognition that they deserve.

Science advances by overthrowing the existing paradigm, or at least significantly expanding or modifying it. Thus, there is a certain **constructive subversiveness** built into the scientific enterprise, as a new generation of scientists makes its own contribution. And so it must be. Without that, there would be no scientific advancement. But our respect and admiration for Newton is not diminished by the contributions of Einstein. We can, and do, admire both. This constant renewal and advancement of our scientific understanding is a feature of the scientific enterprise. It requires tolerant **engagement with the**

contrarian view, accepting to arbitrate disputes by the rules of evidence and rationality.

Science requires *freedom*: Freedom to enquire, to challenge, to think, and to imagine the unimagined. It cannot function within the arbitrary limits of convention, nor can it flourish if it is forced to shy away from challenging the accepted.

The content of the scientific work is what is discussed, not the person who produced it, regardless of their nationality or the color of their skin or the god they choose to worship, or the ethnic group they were born into or their gender. These are societal values worth defending, not just to promote the pursuit of science, but to have a better and more humane society. These are the central core of universal values that any truly modern society must possess. Such values, which were already nascent and even present in Ancient Alexandria, and in Medieval Islamic Societies, are totally incompatible with the kind of narrow-minded bigotry that is so prevalent in our region today. But these were values common among our forefathers throughout the middle ages.

Indeed, for many, activities such as reading, thinking, observation and seeking knowledge came to be viewed as religious mandates more than being regarded as mere

cultural activities. Recall that the Quranic revelation started with a one word order: “*Read!*” Recall that Prophet Muhammad said that “the ink of scholars was equal to the blood of martyrs”, and that he encouraged his followers to “seek knowledge, even in China” (then considered the ends of the earth).

Andalusia emerged in the heart of Europe and continued for more than seven centuries since its conquest in 711 CE until the fall of Granada in 1492 CE. In it, all three Abrahamic religions co-existed in an unequalled state of harmony during what is historically defined as the Middle Ages. The Andalusian culture spread out under Islamic rule to embrace a great intellectual, philosophical and scientific renaissance that rendered Toledo, Cordoba and Granada the beacons of the civilized world before the age of European Renaissance. It nurtured great scholars like Maimonides, Ibn Rushd (Averroes), Ibn Araby, and Christian sages, mystics and saints. It transferred Arab knowledge and sciences to Latin and its nascent colloquial variations like French and Italian. Tolerance and knowledge fusion were the mediums of progress until the advent of the overwhelming reconquest (Reconquista) wars when the triumphant Ferdinand and Isabella called on the inquisition, and put out the light of tolerant co-existence in Andalusia.

But the fall of Andalusia also coincided with other problems in other parts of the Muslim world. This was gradually followed by the diminishing role of Islamic culture, and the transfer of the torch of freedom to Italy, where the Renaissance started, before overtaking the rest of Western Europe.

Third, On freedom of Expression and Offensive Speech

We need freedom of expression for it is the first freedom without which you cannot have political accountability or artistic creativity or scientific enquiry, or to introduce the new...

Throughout the middle ages, Muslims would go on to build vast and tolerant empires that promoted learning, science and philosophy. The writings of Plato and Aristotle were translated and studied, and they were referred to as “al-Hakeemain” meaning the two wise men. No one burned or banned their books; instead they were taught and discussed. In fact, with the possible exception of Nalanda, there is no record of Muslims burning libraries.

What about the offensive cartoons of the Prophet Muhammad and the reactions of so many Muslims around the world? What I regret in that episode is

the reaction of leaders and opinion-makers among western societies and non-Muslims towards these cartoons. Reflect for a moment if these cartoons were anti-Semitic, or racist, what would the reaction of the leaders of society have been? They would have said that they reject these anti-Semitic or racist cartoons and even denounced them, but then would have recognized the right of the authors and publishers to print them for that is the price we pay for freedom of expression. But in the case of the cartoons they did not say this or do this. They considered that the very act of printing these offensive cartoons was something to be glorified and supported. We seek the societal rejection of the promoters of hate speech, while still allowing them to exercise free speech. Voltaire's famous phrase: "I may disagree with you, but I will lay down my life to protect your right to say that which I disagree with."

And what about the offended Muslims? There the instructions of the Quran and the history of the prophet are to be our guide. The Quran says:

"The servants of the Beneficent God are those who walk gently on the earth and when addressed by the ignorant ones, their only response is, "Peace be with you."" [Al-fur'qān (The Criterion) 25:63]

The Prophet never returned an insult against anyone, even those who tried to murder him and his companions, who stoned him and who would throw dirt over his head when he was praying in Mecca. In fact when the Muslims were strong enough to re-enter Mecca he declared a general amnesty for all of them.

So, I would simply regret that offensive slur, say “peace” and move on. Giving importance to these slurs and offensive cartoons simply gives them more prominence than they deserve. Indeed, were it not for the controversy that they generated, they would have been forgotten by now.

Envoi

There are many facts and events that demonstrate the extent of freedom in Arab Islamic societies in their heyday. One can argue about this or that event, but the unquestionable truth, however, is that this paradigm of religious, cultural and scientific freedom was a feature of our civilization for centuries and thus is not an import to our culture. In fact, it would be doing an extreme injustice to our heritage to claim that we are importing it from the West today, when its roots are cemented in the history of our civilization and its fruits have given us iconic figures in the arts and sciences; individuals

that give us pride in our culture, and philosophers and scientists of great significance to human civilization.

However, it is sad to note how much we have forgotten of that heritage, and how far we have strayed from the legacy of our forefathers. We must admit that today, Western countries have unquestionably become the leaders in matters of human rights, and freedom of expression. Furthermore, it is also unquestionable today that our lands have become fertile ground for extremism and violence. It is essential to relearn our past history and learn from contemporary societies that have become more advanced than we are today.

WHEN DEMOCRACY GOES AWRY*

It is 2016. As the world gets more and more mesmerized by the American presidential campaign, it behooves us to reflect on one rather unusual aspect of current American politics: there is an unprecedented level of alienation between the public and the institutions of governance. Indeed, many of those vying for the highest office are trying to run as outsiders against the system of government. All are promising to fix it, and though they differ from the extreme right to the extreme left in their ideas and their proposals on how the fixing is to be done, they are all – more or less – in agreement with the public that the current system is dysfunctional and needs a major overhaul. Why?

There is a crisis in the polarization and deadlock in the US congress that led to the shutdown of the US government twice in twenty years, and is periodically taking the US to the brink of default, and that shows what happens when democracy goes away.

* “When Democracy Goes Awry”. Electronic opinion piece posted at www.serageldin.com; 8 February 2016.

The system was never supposed to produce such abysmal results, yet it did. The world's longest functioning constitution failed to rein in the craziness of a small number of extremists due to a series of structural faults that have accumulated in the system during the last forty years. Surprisingly, many of these faults were initially hailed as being a move towards a more democratic system!

First, the party system used to rely on party leaders who helped steer the political actions of the party, selected the key candidates who would represent the party in state and national offices, and there was a hierarchy of leadership starting from the grassroots going up to the national leadership. The party leaders were able to choose candidates who they deemed best for the party and the country, even if they did not have a majority of the party base, as was famously done by the party establishment when they picked Eisenhower as the Republican presidential candidate over Taft who had more primary votes than Eisenhower.

After Watergate, a major reform movement swept the land, and the Democratic Party organized itself to have a series of state primaries or party caucuses as the basis for allocating delegates to the convention who would be bound to vote for the winners of the state ballots in choosing the candidate at the convention.

The delegate count accumulated by each candidate became a nationally tracked scorecard, and the convention became an exercise in the coronation of the candidate who had garnered a majority of the delegates as a result of primary and caucus victories preceding the convention. The Republicans soon followed suit, and both parties now have a grueling series of primaries in the various states before the convention.

While this appears to be an advance for democracy and transparency over the “smoke-filled rooms” where party elders used to broker deals at the convention, it led to a perverse effect. Because the more committed and more ideologically extreme elements of the party participate disproportionately in these primaries and caucuses, they tended to polarize the parties away from the large middle where national elections are won. The system created a process whereby the candidate had to appeal to this narrow base in the party, and all the candidates found themselves in a “bidding war” for the approval of the extreme wing of the party. So, many a great candidate for the general election was considered electable in November, but too moderate to get the party nomination. In effect, though the moderate Eisenhower would lead the Republican Party to two great victories in 1952 and 1956, the new system today

would nominate the much more conservative Taft every time.

But primaries also exist for local elections and for congressional seats. And the effect is the same, and it appears in a much more marked fashion in the House of Representatives. That is where the second problem reinforces the tendencies towards extremism.

The second problem is that of “Gerrymandering” a uniquely American word that is used to describe redistricting in partisan ways favorable to a particular party. The word honors the talents of Elbridge Gerry, governor of Massachusetts, who in 1812 redistricted the state senate districts to favor his party. So eager was Gerry to avoid pockets of opposition and capture all the nooks and crannies of support, that one of these contorted districts looked like a salamander on the map. Hence “Gerry-mander” entered the American political lexicon. Both parties have been guilty of this, albeit with a little more success among the republicans, with the result that at the national level, congressional districts have been redrawn to the point that some 300 out of the 435 seats in the House are not really contestable. The average reelection rate in congress is over 80% and in those districts it reaches above 95%. Whether Democrat or Republican, the incumbents in such seats fear only opposition from within their

own party. In other words, if the incumbent survives the primary, he/she is almost automatically elected in November. This accentuates the perverse effect of the primaries discussed above, and produces further polarization. So the extreme elements that shut down the US Government, and are flirting with default on the Government Debt, are pleasing the narrow constituency that re-elects them in their district.

The third problem comes from the rules adopted in both house and senate. These have a noble objective. The rules are intended to guarantee that the minority view is given every chance to express itself, and to prevent the majority from simply bulldozing the minority and passing legislation as it pleases. But that has allowed the minority to use all sorts of blocking tactics. For example, in the Senate you need 60% to cut off debate and filibusters, so 41% of the Senate can block a vote favored by 59% of the senators. House rules are more complex giving special roles to the Speaker and the Majority Leader, who if they decide to side with the extremist minority can simply prevent a measure from coming to the floor for a vote.

In addition, the American constitutional system allows the passage of legislation only by the agreement of both houses of Congress and the President (who can veto legislation passed by both houses, and it requires

2/3 majorities in both houses to override a presidential veto). The entire system is designed to prevent executive abuses of power by passage of draconian measures that would give enormous power to the executive branch, something that many other countries have suffered from. But that system did not envisage a minority abusing the protections and privileges afforded to it by the constitution to the point where it can end up stopping the operations of government, and holding the national debt hostage to getting their way.

Fourth, a word about money and politics. It is clear that lobbying and donations have skewed the American system to a dangerous point. Most observers of the system agree on that point, and it is not just more complex regulations that are required, it is a major redesign of the system that makes public officials spend a very large part of their time raising enormous funds for their campaigns and puts them in thrall to the contributors and their lobbyists.

It is time for America to face up to these problems. And there are many solutions.

On the question of primaries: there should be a single open primary, where all candidates for the seat compete regardless of party affiliation, and all voters would be allowed to vote, including independents. The

two who garner the most support, then compete for the seat in November. That would bring those who appeal to the most voters to the front, and break the stranglehold that extremists have acquired over the party nominating process. I believe that California is testing this idea.

On redistricting, it is important that this exercise, which is constitutionally mandated every ten years to reflect the demographic changes recorded in the census, should be governed by a non-partisan board and not by the governor and legislature of the state who are by definition partisan.

On the rules in the Congress, with a few exceptions that are constitutionally mandated, these are adopted by it and, therefore, subject to revision by the Congress.

On the question of money in politics, there are many proposals for campaign reform and control of lobbying efforts, but the beneficiaries of the system have blocked these efforts in the past. Maybe the new levels of public disgust against the Congress shown in poll after poll will eventually boost the chances of the reformers. But that is unlikely as long as the Supreme Court continues to consider that corporate money is protected as free speech, a notion that many, if not most, people find aberrant.

Finally, it is relevant for all public officials, not just in America, to remember the wise words of Irish statesman Edmund Burke (1729–1797) who supported the American Revolution, but later opposed the French Revolution. In addressing his constituents he told them: “Your representative owes you, not his industry only, but his judgment; and he betrays instead of serving you if he sacrifices it to your opinion”.

And considering that democracy going awry is an evil thing, it is also pertinent to remember Burke’s warning: “The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing”.

**ECHO-CHAMBERS AND THE VORTEX OF LIES:
SPIRITUALITY AND MATERIALISM IN THE
MODERN STATE***

Introduction

The Modern State is one where a very large number of human beings must co-exist. As such, pluralism, the acceptance of the presence of many views and many communities, is necessary for the survival of such a society. People have to collaborate with each other to develop a complex economy and to develop and adapt to the rapidly changing circumstances that a globalizing economy imposes on all of us. Yet globalization has tended to encourage assertion and emphasis on the national and local components of our identities.

Religion is a dimension of these identities. Conventionally, it responds to the felt need of all people to go beyond the material aspects of their existence. At

* “Echo Chambers and the Vortex of Lies: Spirituality and Materialism in the Modern State”. Remarks delivered in the Seminar on Addressing/Challenging Radicalization and Extremism with Interfaith Dialogue for Peace: What works? Rome, Italy on 28 January 2016.

its best, it inspires and helps us heed the calls of the better angels of our nature.

The power of organized religion has diminished in all modern societies. The prevalence of the modern technology that has transformed our existence, and the inability of conventional institutionalized religious structures to renew their discourse, have resulted in a significant weakening of the power of institutionalized religion, for both good or evil. The ritualized forms of religiosity are more akin to affirmations of belonging to particular communities rather than the fervent expression of faith that they were.

But a spiritual dimension remains central to all our lives. For each person, there are many different external circumstances that make up the content of our earthly days. Sometimes a transformative moment will shake us and help shape our inner life in significant ways. Sometimes it is the slow action of the days that take a toll and make us look to the spiritual aspects of our existence to find meaning in our lives.

Whatever it is, the spiritual domain is one that is largely personal. It gets reinforced by a sense of communion and community with other like-minded people. But in the end, it is not the result of organized religious activity sponsored by the state that will bring

about inner meaning to the lives of many who search for significance beyond material success. And they are many.

The religious establishment, separated from the apparatus of the state, does indeed help many who want to find solace in its arms, and even more, some of its members have direct contacts with smaller communities that draw strength from their numbers and their common faith. Great leaders can indeed send a message to a vast number of followers, but that will not necessarily result in specific political actions in a public realm dominated by the interplay of political and economic interests.

I believe that it is not so much whether the religious establishments and leadership can use the tools of modern connectivity – they can. We saw examples of that during the last generation in the use of telemarketing and other techniques by the commercialized televangelists in the USA, many of whom are certainly still active and adapting to the new tools and toys...rather, it seems to me that the discussion should be much more about the role of spirituality in the private and public space. This should lead us to a more thoughtful discussion of the meaning of spirituality in the developing social context of a hyper-connected society where the whole issue of citizenship with its obligations and responsibilities as well as its rights and privileges is being somewhat neglected. The state will provide the infrastructure

for the expanding connectivity of all domains, secular and religious, material and spiritual. How it is used will depend a lot on the social actors and the evolving constituencies and communities.

On Echo-Chambers and the Vortex of Lies

Let me now turn to Echo-Chambers and the Vortex of Lies. In choosing this rather provocative title for my intervention, I am purposely underlining that the vast availability of the endless possibilities afforded individuals to create communities on line and to create chat rooms and link up with others, as well as the unheard of scale of big data and new forms of analysis force us to confront how do these vast societal tools, that operate from the privacy of one's bedroom, can impact individuals and manipulate them in their millions. Today every taste, every whim, is catered to on the internet. There are myriad chat rooms that one can join, endless new ones that one can create. I believe that when it comes to political opinions or spiritual values, these chat rooms tend to function as *echo-chambers* which reinforce the participants' views rather than expose them to new and alternative ideas. Extremists also use these echo-chambers to their advantage. They suck in the unwary or the lost into their grip, like sucking them into a *Vortex of Lies*, and

then reinforce their poison through the echo-chamber in which the recruit has fallen.

Echo-Chambers are not new. Long before the modern interconnectivity provided by the ICT revolution allowed us to create these virtual “echo-chambers” the equivalent of these echo-chambers existed in bygone societies. They were crafted either by organized religion or by political parties or by ethnic and tribal affinities. In the past they were clearly seen as the path to organize power and to strengthen the position of authority of those who controlled them and the discourse that they produced.

Europe after its long history of politicized religious wars, church and state tensions till these two domains were largely separated in most modern western political systems, seems to have now banished the spiritual from the public sphere. But that is not quite true, for the spiritual still exists and manifests itself differently. After over 70 years of enforced atheism in Russia during the period of the Soviet Union, the Orthodox Church re-emerged almost unscathed from that ordeal, responding to a felt need in the population which was not nostalgic for past practices which they had not experienced, but because they craved a response to something within them.

ECHO-CHAMBERS AND THE VORTEX OF LIES:
SPIRITUALITY AND MATERIALISM IN THE MODERN STATE

Looking at the history of the last century, where the tools of mass media were available for the first time on a large scale, we have seen the horrors that the crowds in hitherto “civilized society” could be driven to by a skillful mix of propaganda and political organization. We saw the seduction of evil, the many who let themselves be sucked into that vortex of lies, who followed the path of least resistance...just go with the flow or at least say nothing.

The crowds, the numbers, the surge...the crowds become mobs... The drive and the drama of human passions unleashed, of human terror unbridled, of emotions unchecked. Those who control the propaganda machine, the political echo-chamber, acquired and deployed their tyrannical power. Nazism is a stark reminder of how unchecked such a mechanism can reach monstrous proportions, even with the limited tools of its period. Today *Da'ish* is a stark reminder of how insidious an infinitely smaller number of people can be with the tools of the 21st century. That is where the Vortex of Lies comes in.

The system with the extremists groups is different. They have special persons whose function it is to engage and convince the chance encounter of a person with a mild expression of interest, a passing “hit” onto the groups’ websites and chat rooms, into a convinced

member of the group. They do so by patiently answering all their questions, hours and days on end, as they gradually feed them the ideology of the extremist group. Invariably it implies that this group is the sole custodian of the truth, that they are on the right path, and all others are lost souls...they have the divine responsibility to improve society...those who oppose this – everyone who is not part of the group – are misguided, then they become enemies and then they have to be fought and from there to acts of murder and mayhem is but a step. The innocent has been effectively sucked into *the vortex of lies* that allows the extremist groups to recruit and indoctrinate their members.

Echo-Chambers for both Good and Evil

So both extremists and non-extremists use the new social media and expand their reach with the hyper-connectivity that modern technology makes possible. Over time they both create virtual communities, were the reinforcement of the ideas of the groups functions through the echo-chambers that communities like to create. But the non-extremists are much weaker because they are adaptable groups who do not try to form a specific ideology where their members congregate largely as a result of shared likes and dislikes from sports to restaurants to films, and maybe physical

proximity at work or home which help provide a common background and neighborhood interests.

Can we get people to cross from one echo-chamber into another? Can we retrieve those who fell into the Vortex of Lies?

A recent scientific study¹ of the impact of the new social media (done by scientists largely from Italy, I might add) found that the new social media resulted primarily in reinforcing a person's views by providing links to people who think along similar lines and who believe in the same things. They create an "echo-chamber" where views are reinforced to the detriment of counter arguments.

This is especially true of those who believe in conspiracy theories and who are particularly resistant to consider factual and scientific arguments to the contrary. Thus "debunking" is particularly difficult and largely ineffective. Arguments, even false arguments, that are presented in a form or narrative that fits with the overall posture of the group are far more likely to be accepted.

¹ See "Debunking in a World of Tribes" by Fabiana Zollo, Alessandro Bessil, Michela Del Vicario, Antonio Scalal, Guido Caldarelli, Louis Shekhtman, Shlomo Havlin, Walter Quattrociocchi; in Arxiv; <http://arxiv.org/pdf/1510.04267v1.pdf> accessed 15 January 2016.

This rigorous scientific study examined the effectiveness of debunking through a quantitative analysis of 54 million users over a time span of five years (January 2010, December 2014), specifically comparing how users interact with proven (scientific) and unsubstantiated (conspiracy-like) information on Facebook in the US. The scientists examined 47,780 debunking posts and found that attempts at debunking are largely ineffective.

The findings confirm the existence of “echo-chambers” where users interact primarily with other conspiracy-like pages. And they are very resistant to postings that differ from that overall perspective. They are especially resistant to posts that try to debunk the conspiracy-theory view that they have espoused.

It was noted that only a small fraction of usual consumers of unsubstantiated information interact with the posts. Furthermore, these tend to be the most committed conspiracy-believers and rather than internalizing debunking information, they often react to it negatively. The scientists go on to note that “Indeed, after interacting with debunking posts, users retain, or even increase, their engagement within the conspiracy echo-chamber”.

So this does not augur well for our efforts to debunk the narrative of the extremist groups who invariably

posit some form of conspiracy against the spiritual values that they represent and against the golden future they want to bring about. The better course, the one more likely to bring results, is to be able to convince the youth, through intensive use of the social media that they favor using, before they are drawn into the vortex of lies and into the echo-chamber of the extremists.

Thus debunking extremist arguments is still necessary, and vigorous public debate is needed, but its primary effect will be to gradually expand the base of those who reject the extremist arguments and therefore do not join them, rather than successfully converting a large number of those who have already become sympathizers with the extremist narrative and its purported cause.

Conclusions: Back to the Hyper-Connected Public Sphere

What can we conclude from these preceding observations on echo-chambers and the vortex of lies? It is that we must try to reach the disaffected, the unhappy, the marginalized and the victimized before they are sucked into that vortex of lies. The lies that successfully seduce youth with an appeal to a higher cause then pulls them into the vortex of its ever deeper and narrower perspective that rejects all

but those who share that same set of ideas and beliefs. Once inside, even when confronted by evidence-based counter-arguments they will tend to reject them, as was demonstrated by that massive scientific study.

Thus the many different echo chambers that cater to political, spiritual, religious, or social affinities **all** need to be strengthened so that fewer and fewer will be caught into the extremist vortex of lies. That of course is back to pluralism, freedom of expression of multiple ideas and the range of issues and expressions of a society that values its diversity and recognizes it as a source of strength.

Here the public and spiritual domains must come into contact once again. Not in the sense of the extremist version where the appeal is that it is a religious duty to change society, but rather that it is the power of citizenship in a plural society that allows each person to search for the spiritual in the manner that best suits them.

The public sphere is where we maintain the rules and the system that allows us all these rights of freedom of expression and of association, and the political process in a pluralistic democracy is how we make it work. The responsibility of citizenship, in a secular state, helps maintain the freedom to explore the spiritual in a private sphere. Mixing the two pollutes the purity of the spiritual

with the necessary give and take of political discourse and decisions making in a pluralistic public realm.

I believe that the spiritual is more important than ever in a world where material well-being and the accumulation of all the trappings of wealth have become the measure of success in life. Whether alone or in groups, we need to give attention to the voice within, to be able to hear the calls of the better angels of our nature. This spirituality involves introspection, self-doubt, searching and ultimately finding inspiration not to blindly join or to quietly follow others. And what is more to find that inspiration without falling into the trap of the arrogance of self-righteous isolation and the conceit of superiority. There are those who will choose the path of mysticism, while others will choose the path of charitable engagement and social activism to express their spiritual values. That diversity is welcome. It enriches society enormously.

The role of the state is to facilitate the contact between the people, to protect the variety of opinions and manifestations that occur, except when they transgress into calls for hatred and violence against specific groups or against society at large. For the state is but the tool of the people. Remember, it is government of the people by the people for the people.

ON THE CHALLENGES OF DEMOCRATIC SECURITY*

Introduction

We are all faced with the enormous challenge to find the best means to provide security against terrorism while protecting the human rights of citizens and the democratic freedoms we have come to cherish and take for granted. are among the most important issues of our time. Benjamin Franklin is quoted as having said:

“Those who would give up Liberty to purchase Safety, will lose both and deserve neither”.

Ben Franklin’s admonition is a good one, yet, every society – especially in a time of war or imminent danger – will agree to special limitations on its liberty to ensure more security for its citizens. To promote security while protecting our freedoms and maintaining our democratic structures is the challenge in many places today.

* On the Challenges of Democratic Security: Remarks delivered at the Council of Europe, Strasbourg on 1 June 2015

All democratic societies that value the liberties of their citizens, are content to declare that a crime is an act, not a thought, and is punished after the fact, and indeed have constructed elaborate legal and judicial procedures to ensure that police and prosecutors actually punish the guilty party after proving that they are responsible “beyond a reasonable doubt”. They prefer to let a guilty party go free than to incarcerate an innocent person.

Terrorism poses a different challenge. The public wants the government to prevent the act of terror from occurring. To prevent an act from happening will require broadened surveillance and police powers to act on suspicions of conspiracy rather than to await that terrorists execute an act of terror and then capture the guilty party. That sets us on a dangerous path, where our liberties are at risk. Recall the US “Patriot Act” passed after 9/11 to give government powers to fight a “War on Terror” begat Guantanamo, preventative detention, torture and the systematic murder by drone attacks.

Now increasingly Europe is facing that terrorist threat as the cleavage in the global system between the Muslim World and others, especially the West, widens; and Muslim communities grow within Western Societies where Islam is rapidly becoming the second religion of its citizens. Many of the young in

these societies are alienated from the mainstream of their societies, feeling marginalized and excluded, and becoming prime targets for recruitment into terrorist actions by local or international terrorists.

Globally, the rhetoric of the Media-enhanced Muslim discourse has undergone a radicalization that promotes exclusion and violence, wreaking devastation in the predominantly Muslim societies as well as increasing its attraction to the alienated youth in Europe.

So, how does a society retain its democratic character when it has to prevent terrorism and suspects a number of its citizens of potential complicity with terrorists? By emphasizing pluralism and inclusion, by presenting a coherent historical narrative that gives the ancestors of all the citizens of Europe something to feel proud of and to recognize themselves in the magnificent enterprise that is the construction of Europe.

Thus I believe that the pursuit of Democratic Security is not only feasible, but necessary...for in the end I agree with Karl Popper who so presciently observed over half a century ago:

“The alleged clash between freedom and security ... turns out to be a chimera. For there is no freedom if it is not secured by the state; and conversely, only a state which is controlled by the free citizens can offer them any reasonable security.”—Karl Popper

So allow me to cover several themes:

First: we must mention the tensions in this changing world, because Europe remains part of that globalized but fraying World Order.

Second: That confronting terrorism is different from war and from confronting regular crime – with the exception of major drug cartels and arms trafficking rings, which often overlap with terrorist activities.

Third: What is happening in the Muslim world generally, and specifically its impact on the Muslim communities of Europe.

Fourth: let us review the mechanisms of extremism and violence and how to confront them.

Fifth: I will address the mounting dangers of populist anti-Muslim right-wing political extremism in Europe.

Sixth and Finally: I would like to wrap up this lecture with a view of the alliance that we can create on both sides of the Mediterranean to confront the mounting threats of extremism and violence.

Thumbnail Sketches of a Changing World

These are perilous times. The Old World Order is collapsing before our eyes. A New World Order remains

tantalizingly beyond our reach. But that is another story for another day.

In my region and beyond, the Arab and Muslim worlds are in profound crisis. Radicalization of youth and the appearance of extremist movements garbed in religious rhetoric performing the most horrific acts of barbarism while governments collapse is a nightmare that goes beyond our wildest imaginations. Millions of refugees have been driven from their homes by the horrors that are daily occurrences in conflict zones, where fanatics have taken over and given up on any semblance of human decency...or worse: they relish their abandonment of the simplest norms of human conduct. They do not have any pretense of civilized behavior, as they roam in the wreckage of failed states and civil wars.

In the Mediterranean, we remain powerless and frozen as desperate refugees risk – and lose – their lives in a rush to the glittering promise of Europe. They are not just seeking better economic opportunities; they are also fleeing from the collapsing countries which were once their homes.

These are difficult tasks requiring extraordinary skill and wisdom. But perhaps none more than in Europe, where societies have to adapt to having significant

Muslim minorities in their midst. But Europe has achieved its enormous successes due to visionaries such as Monet and Schumann. It gave birth to the European Union on the old continent, rising like a phoenix from the blood bath of the Second World War. A lattice of former enemies becoming allies; a community of nations. It succeeded beyond our wildest dreams. Within a generation young people from France and Germany could no longer imagine their countries going to war.

Today that vision has stalled. The economic crisis and the rising tide of migrants as well as the growth of alienated, mostly Muslim, minorities within the countries of the EU are posing new problems. One of these most fundamental problems is that of ensuring security in a democratic society.

Terrorism, Security and Democracy

Terrorism by extremist groups has become part of our contemporary world.

Confronting terrorism is different from war and different from confronting regular crime – with the possible exception of major drug cartels and arms trafficking rings, which often overlap with terrorist activities.

The religious fanatics who are now causing such mayhem have also added another dimension. Consider the ideological fervor of the suicide bomber. It is far harder to guard against the danger of a killer who kills himself with his victims than it is to guard against one who is planning to escape the scene of the crime. This phenomenon, needs tackling at the base of the recruiting and indoctrination that feeds the terrorist ranks as much as at the stage of the attempted terrorist actions.

Why Terrorism is different from War: In the wake of the horrendous monstrosity of the attacks of 11 September 2001, the political response of the US Government was to wage a “War on Terror”, and to argue that terrorists were enemy combatants not subject to normal criminal legal procedure. This political terminology that attempted to find parallels in the treatment of prisoners of war in other wars, was tortuous and faulty.

For one thing, where enemy soldiers captured in a battlefield of a conventional war do not normally deny their affiliation (they even declare it by wearing military uniforms), the clarity of distinguishing between a terrorist and an innocent bystander is more akin to distinguishing between a criminal and a member of the public at large.

For another, conventional wars are expected to have logical ends with an opposing army vanquished or a negotiated peace between the parties that usually involves an exchange of prisoners. What form would the end of the war on terror take? With whom would such an ending be negotiated? In the absence of clarity on such issues, would that result in such prisoners being held indefinitely without trial? How would such an outcome be in any way compatible with any definition of the rule of law and of democratic governance?

Security is a fundamental human right, but so are free speech, freedom of assembly, the right to petition, the right to organize, the right to strike and the right to privacy, to be safe from unreasonable search and seizure, the presumption of innocence, the right to refrain from self-incrimination, and of *Habeas Corpus* in the Anglo-Saxon system, are equally fundamental rights and must be consistently protected.

Advocates of passing these special laws that restrict these rights argue from fear of the consequences of delayed action, the need to move swiftly under conditions of imperfect knowledge. Opponents, such as myself, would agree to some forms of expanded surveillance (under strict judicial review and control) plus extra-territorial cooperation of the investigative, policing and prosecutorial powers of various

governments... But ultimately it is through cultural confrontation, defeating extremist ideas with ideas of openness and pluralism that terrorism shall be defeated.

On Being a Muslim Today

Clearly however, there is a cleavage between Muslims and non-Muslims almost everywhere. And even though the vast majority of the 1,400 million Muslims in the world are peaceful, law-abiding citizens, there is – in the last thirty to forty years or so – undoubtedly a strong current of religious fanaticism developing, that is bigoted and exclusionary, that has shifted the center of gravity of Muslim communities towards a more conservative posture. Even more, in the same period we have seen militants take over established movements and sects, and the resurgence of the Sunna/Shia split has become more pronounced.

But confronting them will require actions on many levels, and returning the center of gravity towards the more liberal, open and rational Islam of old requires that we confront ideas with ideas and change the religious discourse, the historical narrative and the public discourse in our societies. So let us mention a few words about what is happening in the Muslim

world generally, and more specifically its impact on the Muslim communities of Europe.

In the Muslim-Majority Countries

The enormous resentment that Muslims feel towards the West generally, and the US particularly, is not fully understood or appreciated in the West.

That resentment runs deep. It is accompanied by a feeling of victimization that calls on memories from the crusades to colonialism. That feeling is exacerbated by perceived western double standards in treating human rights issues in Palestine and the continued Israeli occupation of territories conquered in 1967. More recently, in the post 9/11 world, the wars of the US in Afghanistan and especially Iraq have had devastating effect in expanding the gulf that separates the predominantly Muslim World from the US and the West.

In addition, there is in some Arab and Muslim countries a deep sense of frustration at what they perceive to be the inability of their governments to respond to their aspirations or to stand up to the west. This resentment and deep sense of grievance has been accumulating like a dangerous store of combustible fuels. Any spark, no matter how small, (like the

Cartoons in 2005/2006) can touch the accumulated fuels and trigger the explosion of anger and the ensuing fires, literally and metaphorically, on a global scale. There were also those who actively fanned the flames to advance their own political agendas. But on the whole, it is a mistake to try to relate the resulting fire to the size of the spark, without trying to understand the accumulation of fuel.

Indeed, in 2005, the explosions in the French suburbs that resulted in rioting, curfews and a state of emergency, was not related to a confrontation between “The West” and “Islam”. But police stereotyping of second generation immigrants, and the youth’s accumulated sense of marginalization, of the unfulfilled promise of the western lifestyle, distinct feelings of being second class citizens, unaddressed grievances and other issues all provided an accumulating stock of fuel, waiting for the right spark to ignite it into a roaring blaze.

In the US in the 1960s, starting with the Watts riots and subsequently affecting many urban centers, blacks revolted and burned down entire areas of major cities, again with minimal sparks but with vast reservoirs of resentment and unmet demands for justice and equality. Minor versions of that social nightmare revived questions of brutality of white police officers

against black citizens, from Ferguson Missouri to Cleveland Ohio.

So, the first misunderstanding to be cleared up is that it is the accumulation of fuels and not the spark that must be addressed. What is essential is to drain away those fuels and air out the receptacles that held them.

In the meantime it is also important that these same “accumulated fuels” are creating the fertile soil for the recruitment of disaffected youths in the networks of the extremists, be its appeal religiously or secularly based.

The Changing View of Muslims

A new youthful effervescence is everywhere. The political expression of the youth movements were manifested in the revolutions of the Arab Spring in 2011 and beyond. That many of these revolutions were taken over by organized religious forces and that the cleavages in many societies led to chaotic conditions, civil wars and the emergence of the most extreme forms of barbaric terrorism being displayed by the forces of Da'ish, the so-called “Islamic State” in Iraq and Syria, is a manifestation of the combination of several historic broad societal currents:

- **The intellectual bankruptcy of many of the Arab regimes** over long periods of reign preceding the revolutions of the Arab Spring. Their inability to renew the social contract in a meaningful fashion, and the continued monopolization of power by a mediocre elite that suppressed youthful talent and imposed a system of patronage for political and social advancement.
- **The re-emergence of political Islam**, long suppressed by a nationalist and secular political narrative, but given new wings by the Iranian revolution, the funding of the oil states and rich Arab individuals and the emergence of Hizbullah in Lebanon during the long civil war there and its role against the Israeli war in Lebanon. These and other factors were “topped up” by the return of the “Afghan Arabs” who were allied to the native Mujahedeen against the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, which yielded the Taliban regime there.
- **The American invasion of Iraq in 2003 and the subsequent** mismanagement of the tense ethnic and religious cleavages in that society dealt a traumatic blow to the self-confidence of Muslims, who viewed the direct invasion by America and its allies of both Iraq and Afghanistan, as a direct humiliation of Muslims by the West. Furthermore, the systematic

murder of civilians by the use of drones in Pakistan, Afghanistan, Yemen and elsewhere; all served to inflame sentiments of victimization that fed the Muslim majorities' emotional despair and consequent greater readiness to accept more extreme positions that would promise a return of a modicum of self-esteem and dignity in the face of perceived continued humiliation.

- **The continued Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territories** and the incompetence of Fatah and its leadership which brought forth Hamas in Gaza.
- **The emergence of a powerful tyrannical bureaucracy**, especially in Egypt, which stifles and alienates all who deal with it. This type of bureaucratic tyranny had already been identified as a cause of the youthful rebellion of the 1960s throughout the west.

On Extremism and Violence

So, let us review the mechanisms of extremism and violence and how to confront them. Let us dissect the mechanisms of radicalization, recruitment and mobilization used by extremist ideologies.

Here I am fully aware that the primary responsibility lies on our side of the Mediterranean, and that we are the ones that must get the Muslim majorities to reject the extremist and fanatic fringe, to condemn the barbarous acts of mayhem and murder, the crimes against humanity that are daily being committed under the guise of promoting their particular version of Islam. To do so, we must change the religious and public and cultural discourse in our countries and we must start with an auto-critique among our intellectuals by asking why our societies have become such fertile ground for extremism and violence and what we did wrong in the past...

I also have no doubt that advances in that cause will have positive ideological and identity-related effects on the Muslim communities in Europe, which – when combined with other actions for promoting democratic security – will help reduce youthful radicalization and curb the lure of extremism and violence.

The Arab and Muslim Worlds are in a paroxysm of violence and chaos; of collapsing states and rising militias; of terrorism and horrors beyond description; of countless victims and dislocated populations. Doubtless military force and strong state policing will be needed to restore order, stability and security. But I remain convinced that beyond the necessary military and police actions, there is still the need to

understand why these extreme ideas that beget violence and terrorism have spread in our societies and how to fight such ideas with ideas. That is a subject where the Library of Alexandria has led the way with an auto-critique of what went wrong and a bold exploration on how to fight ideas with ideas...

It is clear from such arguments that we should promote pluralism and multi-faceted identities within the national entity, or even the supra-national entity, as in Europe. Such a cultural framework should also facilitate orderly change through discussion and debate and peaceful participatory means of citizen engagement. All these aspects will diffuse the potential tensions and make it difficult for extremism to take root, for dissidence to turn to anger, and for anger to turn into rage and violence.

Let us go back to dissecting the mechanisms of radicalization, recruitment and indoctrination that take youths into extremism and violence.

On Extremism: Extremism is a political position whose adherents reject all possibilities of discussion; reject any notion about the possible error of their understandings and who push their arguments to the most extreme positions. Each political school of thought has its extremists, but extremists of all stripes

in the end reject accommodation with others who do not share their views. Extremism begets violence.

Recruitment and Indoctrination: It is important to understand that the grounds for the rise of extremism are prepared from **a very early age**. Modern science seems to agree that pre-school and family influences on the child are very important in the formation of attitudes and deep rooted belief systems, that may mix with other orientations later on, but may reemerge later in life. Thus abused children often become abusers themselves. Abuse includes physical as well as emotional abuse and neglect and the influence of adults on the formation of the child must not be underestimated. Vital too are the teachers in the school system, and the teaching materials they use.

Beyond parent and school, and possibly most important source of influence – especially since it is strongest in the transitional stage of adolescence, of rebellious teens – is the influence of peers. Today because of the Internet and social connectivity peer groups include virtual as well as physical groups.

Indeed looking at these points it becomes clear that many of the poorer children in society such as children in dysfunctional families and broken homes, not to mention in orphanages and street children, are

particularly vulnerable, as they have not benefited from the attention that parenting provides or the proper guidance that adequate schooling should provide. They are even more primed for the drift into gangs and/or to be recruited into movements, where extremism is cultivated and anger is stoked.

From Anger to Rage: Anger at perceived injustices that can be redressed is at the start of the process of moving from rational critique to political extremism and from there it is but a step to rage, and fanatical, self-justified violence. When religious belief is added to claim that perpetrating such violence is part of obeying the commandments of God, the mix becomes most potent. As Pascal observed:

“Men never do evil so completely as when they do it from religious convictions.” —Blaise Pascal

The Role of Charismatic Leaders: Undoubtedly charismatic leaders can articulate an extremist message and reach a wide audience in a convincing way. Today, we can see that they can also have followings based largely on the mass media and the new communications technology.

But whether led by a charismatic leader, or by solidarity groups, the movement draws its resilience

from its recruits. It would be a mistake to think that assassinating the leader of such a movement would terminate the movement. New leaders will emerge. For once it becomes a movement; the extreme political message creates a different kind of dynamic, and is able to recruit new adherents and new leaders until the context which gave it birth is changed by other means. It then becomes marginalized. **The end of violent extremist groups is not defeat on the battlefield like organized armies; it is by drifting into irrelevancy and losing all meaningful contact with the aspirations of large parts of the population.** We must battle ideas with ideas.

Recruits: The recruit feels that belonging to the group communicates a strength that can raise the recruit far above the limits of his or her perceived potentialities. Thus breaking the bonds of conventional family and social structure is a liberating and empowering notion that is mediated by affiliation to the new group that follows that leader or espouses that ideology. It is that feeling of liberation and of new empowerment that the recruit feels in surrendering to this ideology that makes them feel that they have not been led away from themselves, but rather that through the leader, the ideology or the group they have found a heightened identity for the first time.

The group replaces friends and family. They tend to acquire an extraordinary smugness of self-regard, with disdain for those outside the group and thus it actually reinforces the worst kind of solipsism – In popular parlance they are “brainwashed”. This process is so thorough that many of them are willing to commit suicide for the cause, and more seriously to kill many innocents who are presumed guilty merely because they do not belong to the group.

For youth there is also the attractiveness of the cause...the idea to devote oneself to something larger than oneself, larger than life itself, to argue for sacrifice for the greater good is reinforced in all recruits. It gives purpose to an otherwise aimless youthful existence, and thus we should not be surprised to find that children of privilege, not just the poor and the destitute are often captivated into cults or extremist politics. The nobility of the cause is underlined by a call for sacrifice, not material gain.

The Dangers of the Politics of Fear and Hate

Scratch the surface of security and you get a prompt abridgement of liberty. The politics of fear and hate expound populist promises of security and economic

opportunities by scapegoating immigrants, minorities and the legitimate governments.

Right wing political extremism in Europe: Today there are politicians in every country who fan the fears of the public, who play on the economic difficulties, promote hatred and xenophobia, and use the ensuing distress to build a power base and to dictate to the state the course that it should follow. They build on the alienating effect of vast bureaucracies, on the real distress of many suffering economic deprivation, and the presence of minorities to call for a return to a pure and powerful vision of the nation, the people or the religion that they claim as the cure-all for the ills of society. More debates, more participation will check the advance of the populist xenophobes.

Yes, there is infinitely more communication and interaction today than in past generations, but it is shallow and creates a world where we chart economic strategies that refuse to recognize that the market is a good servant but a bad master, and that governments cannot abandon their responsibilities to those less fortunate. A world where the mounting evidence of science remains ignored, where the warnings of the thoughtful remain unheeded, and the cries of the dispossessed remain unanswered.

I am not calling for censorship. Far from it. I am calling for action to redeem the values that we hold essential. We need to remind the public that there is:

No security without peace

No peace without justice

No justice without equity

No equity without participation

That is the meaning of true pluralism, true cosmopolitanism. That is the basis for ensuring democratic security.

Potential Opportunities for Mutual Understanding

So having established that we face the same enemies on both sides of the Mediterranean, I hope to establish that by better understanding our cultures and revising the historical narratives that undergird our sense of identities, we will help create opportunities for mutual understanding and cooperation, including the better engagement and inclusion of the European Muslims, even those who are resisting “assimilation” and undertaking programs of “self-exclusion”.

Teaching a different historical narrative... I believe that Europe and the East, especially Egypt, have had an interlinked destiny. And the crusades notwithstanding,

that common destiny, intertwined throughout our histories, has been constructive and enriching. See how the torch of reason and learning passed from hand to hand and culture to culture on both sides of the Mediterranean.

We can start by saying that for millennia Egypt carried the torch of advanced knowledge, with other parallels in what is Iraq today, and a claim for the Minoan culture of ancient antiquity, but nothing rivaled ancient Thebes in its heyday. Then the torch passed to the golden Greeks who have erected a structure of thought and produced a cultural legacy that dazzles us to this day. Alexander then briefly united the world and changed it forever. The torch passed from Greece to Alexandria. It stayed there until Rome was to make the Mediterranean the “mare nostrum”, and establish the largest empire the world had yet seen. But Rome soon fell, and from the sack of Rome to the fall of Constantinople, Europe would be in the dark ages. But the sun of Islam was rising, and the torch of learning and culture was passed to the Muslims and Arabs whose dominions stretched from Andalusia to India and from the Caucasus to Africa. The last manifestation of that great culture and its decline was to be the Ottoman Empire which coexisted with the start of the Renaissance and was to

pass the torch once more to Europe which has held it up high since that time.

European civilization in its modern form emerged not from the Renaissance but from the scientific revolution that followed. That was accompanied by the emergence of the values of the enlightenment that would characterize the west in the last three centuries. Obviously, American morals and culture as well as American power and technology played a major role in global affairs from the second half of the 19th century. But, for our purposes today, let us say that western civilization and culture is largely European civilization and culture.

That European civilization dominated the world in the last four centuries. Jared Diamond famously attributed that to “Guns, germs and steel”. This enormous growth of European dominance had also a lot to do with the adoption of the scientific outlook, the rapid advance of scientific knowledge, the swift expansion of technological developments and the continuing progress in western institutional structures and performance. Many of the elites in the developing countries, the colonies, studied in European universities and admired European institutions.

Practically all the Muslim majority countries of today were at one time or another colonized by Europeans who left their legacies on the nations and peoples of those lands. Coming out of colonialism into independence in the 20th century, the Muslim majority countries sought to reassert their national identities but with a mixed part of European culture added, frequently modeling their institutions on European institutions.

But like the wave that has gone on the beach as far as it goes and draws back to the sea, so Europe has felt the counter currents as immigrants poured across Europe post WWII, and then post decolonization in the 1960s and 70s, to be further enhanced by the economic migrants attracted by the phenomenal success of the European Community in the 1980s and 1990s. Today Islam is Europe's second religion, and growing.

That historical narrative gives the Muslims and those who come from both sides of the Mediterranean a positive role in the construction of the culture that we share. It does not ignore the conflicts but downplays them in terms of the contributions to the common culture. After all, that is what Europeans have done with the historical narrative of Europe itself.

The overwhelming majority of humanity has rejected the ideas of racially pure, ethnically unique or homogenous religious societies. Those who promoted that by genocide and ethnic cleansing have been defeated. But the corollary, the acceptance of pluralism, is proving exceptionally difficult to implement. Diverse communities may indeed be enriching the mosaic of a multi-cultural society, but it also generates a sense of unease among the population. We have witnessed disasters in the Balkans and Rwanda, and dissolution of the state in Yugoslavia and Sudan...all reminders that pluralism is difficult to implement, even in the democratic societies of Europe, without verging into separation. Belgium is at a crossroads today, while Czechoslovakia underwent a peaceful separation between Czechs and Slovaks.

The task therefore is to rejoice in our diversity, while we hold on to the universal values that we believe in, and that create the common bonds for consensual social actions.

But for us in the Middle East, war is still a daily reality. In a few states, the steps towards democracy are nascent and still uncertain, while in Libya, Sudan, Somalia, Yemen, Syria and Iraq, chaos reigns as states collapse and extremist movements like Da'ish and Al-Qaeda advance on their murderous rampage.

We must redouble our efforts to reach out to youth and listen to their concerns as we craft our own agendas for discussion. In undertaking this task, it is imperative that we act, and that we act quickly. As we speak, there is violence in our streets, aimlessness amongst our youth, anxiety among our elders, and a virtual despair among the many who look beyond material success for the inner meaning of their lives.

On our side of the Mediterranean, despite the horrors and the dislocations, the countless victims and the millions of displaced people; despite the merchants of hate and the fear and the intimidation they deploy, there are some of us who have taken up the challenge of fighting ideas with ideas. In Europe, there are many voices who reject the politics of hatred and fear, there are many who stand up for the ideals of European civilization and reassert the primacy of human rights and democratic governance. Can we build bridges to link the two?

- I believe in the devotion and hard work of all those who give of themselves to building these elusive bridges of understanding.
- Those who believe in that worthy goal, and confront the inevitable setbacks by picking up the pieces and starting again.

- Those who are armed with the conviction that ultimately there is no way forward but to seek a common language for understanding.
- Those who believe there can be no understanding without mutual respect for our differences, no salvation other than peace based on justice and fairness for all people.

Democratic Security Revisited

And so, let us return to our beginning: the issue of democratic security:

My prescription for the challenges of democratic security are applicable to both sides of the Mediterranean.

First: to confront terrorism in our midst, or imported to our shores by: Expanding surveillance, but under strictly and judicially controlled mechanisms... to avoid the slippery slope of too vast an expansion of the policing powers that inevitably leads to the abridgment of citizens' rights.

Second: To expand programs that reach out to the excluded and the marginalized in our societies, even in these times of austerity and tight budgets. Such inclusion is essential if we are to avoid the accumulated fuels of antagonism and latent rage that a small spark of an insignificant incident or a fiery orator can produce.

Even more, even if these latent fuels do not explode, they provide the foundation, the cover and the pool of recruits of potential extremist networks that live off the anger of the disaffected citizens, and potentially fan their anger into rage and into full-blown terrorist networks.

Third: to rejoice in our diversity as we rethink our historical narratives and to ensure that our school curricula and our mass media bring such aspects to the fore.

Fourth: we must do so on both sides of the Mediterranean: Muslim-majority countries must also change their public, political, religious and cultural discourse. That common quest on both sides of the Mediterranean lays the foundations for a constructive cultural collaboration that will enhance our collective abilities to defeat the forces of barbarism and terror as well as the populist and extremist parties and political movements in our midst with their xenophobic preying on the fears of the average citizen.

Fifth: Fight ideas with ideas: Remember that while military intervention and muscular policing are needed to ensure security; in the end, ideas are defeated by ideas. We are engaged in a battle of ideas. We are engaged in a battle to revive the humanistic legacy of

the enlightenment, to assert the primacy of human rights and the values of openness, rationality and understanding.

Sixth: Focus on youth: Our policies, our programs and our actions must be primarily directed to youth and the very young. Remember the Arab Spring before it turned into the Islamist winter...our youth helped spark these revolutions, as they moved entire populations and defied their rulers armed only with their convictions.

Seventh: Understand where the ICT revolution is taking us: The ICT revolution and the tools it has engendered are transforming our societies at a dizzying pace. The hyper-connected youth of today and tomorrow live in a global society that bears little resemblance to the milieu of their forebears. This rupture in the slow pace of societal transformations may be pleasant and peaceful compared to the bloody impacts of political revolutions and wars, but I believe it is more profound and much more rapid than anything we have witnessed before.

Eighth: All people of goodwill must collaborate in this battle for democratic security, for ultimately it affects all aspects of our societies. The result of this battle will reaffirm or destroy the fruits of democratic

freedoms and the lattice of social relations and the social values that they share that allows a pluralistic society to exist. From such a foundation, the legislative structure of society that protects human rights while ensuring the security of its citizens will emerge and evolve to match the changing times as we move from the present to the future.

Conclusions

Social values are more important than legislation, but legislation is still important. Martin Luther King said:

“Morality cannot be legislated, but behavior can be regulated. Judicial decrees may not change the heart but they can restrain the heartless.”

The protection of fundamental Human Rights is ultimately the basis of a humane society. While each society will have its own specificity, none can claim to ignore the fundamental charter of the UN’s Universal Declaration of Human Rights and still claim to be part of the civilized conclave of nations. There is no claim to specificity that would justify the oppression of women or the mutilation of girls. There is no possible argument for the persecution of minorities or the enslavement of the young. And likewise, it is essential that the framework for a legal response to terrorism

should be found in a manner that does not infringe on our fundamental human rights in a society that still protects our security as well as our rights.

And that brings me back to the importance of this initiative on Democratic Security. It is the essential debate of our times. It is the debate that any informed citizenry must have about the unavoidable reality of terrorism which intrudes on our daily lives. Only an informed citizenry and its responsible elected representatives can tackle this issue effectively. For ultimately it is up to the legislators to craft the laws that will govern the restraints on state action as much as on wayward individuals in the right balance that will respond to both security and the protection of our rights. In so doing they would indeed be performing that great calling to: “Go forth and fashion the wise constraints that make people free.”